

PLANT THE SEED TOUR IN REVIEW

WOW! We can't believe it's over (it's [not](#)). Jennifer Morales and Franciszka Voeltz, here, reporting to you from live from the other side of the first installment of the Plant the Seed writing workshop tour—a two-month eleven-state literary extravaganza of workshops, readings and connections with fabulous humans (writerly and otherwise) and with so many wonderful places. While the travel (all by train and a little bit of bus) was sometimes wearying, every workshop and reading and encounter with other writers was more magnificent than we could have asked for.

As an offering of gratitude to all those that supported us along the way, we're sending out this missive to thank you and to share some of the highlights of the journey. We also hope you'll stay in touch with us. Sign up for our email lists ([Jennifer's](#)) ([Frankie's](#)) and consider joining us (and pass the word along to others) for one of our longer workshops this summer:

[Plant the Seed -- Northeast Missouri](#)

Saturday afternoon, June 30 - Wednesday afternoon, July 4, 2018

Milkweed Mercantile Eco Inn at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in Rutledge, Missouri

[Plant the Seed -- Viroqua](#)

Friday evening, August 17 – Sunday afternoon, August 19, 2018

Driftless Writing Center, Viroqua, Wisconsin



Portland, OR

Arriving from the midwest in early March, Portland offered us a breath of fresh, green, spring air, with lichen, flowers, and moss everywhere and rivers running free. We took a walk and learned the perils of hiking near a golf course. We revelled in the fact that the first workshop of the tour was packed just past capacity, and in

the coziness of meeting in Lo's living room (which felt like a wonderful *welcome home*).



Thank you to Shannon Pate and Gina Blaylock and Baby Birdie for graciously hosting us and being culinary with us and walking with us and wooing us (that one's for baby Birdie) and playing just ONE MORE GAME of scattergories late (for new parents) into the night. And thanks to Lo Goldberg and housemates for the heart and time and snack-making they put into hosting the best inaugural workshop of the tour there could be.

Seaview, WA

We rode to the Washington coast with Feather and Jane who participated in the workshop we led at the [Sou'wester](#)—all of us relieved to make our way out of the buzz and traffic-yness of the city and we arrived at the edge of the continent just in time to yell *WE LOVE YOU, OCEAN!!!* into the wild and salty spray of the pacific at sunset. The workshop was a lovely intimate group that was willing to



stay inside



to write on a magnificently sunny day. We were lucky enough to lead a workshop on Friday and then spend the next six days as writers in residence at the Sou'wester in cabin #8 where we moved around the small kitchen like sailors in a galley and listened to the season's first frogs (spring peepers) singing down the road and made daily ocean visits which sometimes involved hiking wonderfully long hikes up into the mossy tree-ish fog-draped places.

Thank you Shannon Pate for mentioning the [Sou'wester](#) and [A.M. O'Malley](#) for her special relationship to the Sou'wester and to [Dawn Stetzel](#), the Sou'wester workshop coordinator, and the Sou'wester itself for hosting and thanks to Feather and Jane for schlepping us and keeping us company and playing with us at the

ocean.

Encinitas, CA

In sparkly Southern California we got to have an outdoor workshop in the gorgeous front yard of host Lia Friedman. We dove deep and wrote among citrus trees and bird song and a plate piled high with Lia-baked chocolate cookies. During a day off, we urban-hiked through secret-seeming canyons and observed tourists and ducks in their natural habitats throughout

Balboa Park and learned how to cook eggs in a microwave as that's all we had in the garage-turned-into-a-mother-in-law-cottage we stayed at.

Thank goodness we had a few extra downtime days in San Diego because Jennifer needed them to recover from a gluten exposure that made her terribly sick. After a second gluten exposure later on in New Orleans, we instituted Operation Absolute Vigilance (which could sound terrifying might it be applied to something other than making sure no more gluten ended up in Jennifer's digestive system throughout the rest of the trip).



Thank you to Lia, for hosting the workshop (always with style) in her beautiful yard and to Yvonne for simultaneously wonderfully welcoming us and schlepping us workshopwards from San Diego.



Tucson, AZ

We were excited to have a lot of outdoor time in the Tucson area! Hazel scooped us from the train station as we arrived in Tucson just after sunrise.



Later that day, we headed out with Hazel and Dirk and Sam to the lush Madera Canyon (where Hazel and Dirk hosted us for the eve). There, we watched turkeys settle in one by one

to roost for the night in the sycamore above the cabin and we woke up to a baby scorpion in a cereal bowl! Harmony and Eric also took us for a hike along the Yetman trail to the Bowen stone house amongst more saguaro cacti than anyone can count and Eric snapped this picture of Frankie feeding Jennifer an imaginary, too-hot quesadilla, as one does in the Arizona desert.

In a time of too many meals in too many mediocre restaurants, it was wonderful to sit down to a magnificent meal with Eric and Harmony on one of our last nights in Tucson. We were also lucky to catch a Shakesqueer Production of Macbeth in a public park—which featured fabulous costumes, fake blood and glitter!

At the reading at [Antigone Books](#) (one of the few remaining independent feminist bookstores in the country), Amy Wheeler Harwood appeared with chapbooks she laid out and printed (as Iron Point Press) on her Riso printer in an impressive last-minute frenzy. It was a magical sight! Jennifer’s chapbook can be ordered [here](#). Frankie’s chapbook can be ordered [here](#).

Thank you to Amy Wheeler Harwood and the [Gloo Factory](#) for all of her YES energy that went into hosting the workshop and chapbook printing. Thank yous to Amy, Hazel and Harmony Hazard for workshop (and reading) promotion. Thank you [Antigone Books](#) for hosting the reading and to [T.C. Tolbert](#), [Kristen Nelson](#) and [Samantha Bounkeua](#) for sharing their work and to [Harmony Hazard](#) for connecting us to Antigone to make it happen and Kate Stern at Antigone for co-organizing the event.



Houston, TX



We noticed a Ferris wheel in downtown Houston and—because this tour was not just about writing but about joy—decided to go for a ride. Turns out, the [jumping cholla](#) (imaginary variety) of the Tucson desert can follow you to Texas and jump on you in your Ferris wheel gondola. (Hence, Jennifer’s facial expression.) Everywhere we walked around Houston, the birds seemed to be singing eight million songs, the drivers would maybe or maybe not stop at the crosswalks for us, and air plants were scattered on the ground. We couldn’t help but love them and Frankie ended up carrying two in her backpack as our pets for the rest of tour.

So many things happened in the Houston area: seriously scary torrential all-day downpours during our visit to Sam Houston State University where stairs into buildings became waterfalls,

the best best EVER Pakistani-adjacent food cooked by Tayyba Maya Kanwal on our first night in the city, finally taking in the badassery that is the Black Panther movie, joining bold and brilliant young poets as they did their inspiring thing at a Let's Get Loud open mic, a sublime sunset as seen from Galveston's shores, learning about the "gay machine" from Lester (the fictional machine that some DJs run their music through to give it all that same dance club sound), reuniting with dear MFA program cohortians and eating raw and vegan food at a black-owned establishment blocks from where we were staying.



Thank you to Iris Gonzalez and Zach Aiuppa for hosting us, taking us to Galveston for a full moon and ice cream, and showing us what a

[Buc-ee's](#) is so we could truly understand that everything is bigger in Texas. (In retrospect, don't shop at Buc-ee's. They apparently dislike The Gays.)



Thank you to the [Fuente Collective](#): [Tayyba Maya Kanwal](#) and [Layla Al-Bedawi](#) and [Patricia Coral](#) for co-organizing a wonderful workshop and welcoming us like family. Thank you to [John Pluecker](#) and the [Failure to Identify Reading Series](#) and [Poets & Writers](#) for the time and effort to secure funding and put on a great reading. Thank you to [Ching-In Chen](#) and [Sam Houston State University](#) and [Let's Get Loud! Open Mic series](#) for co-organizing a craft

talk, a classroom workshop with us and sharing the mic at the open mic with us.

New Orleans, LA

In NOLA, the amazing Ava Hernandez of [Public Allies of New Orleans](#) had us over to work with her spirited new cohort (NOLA's first!) of Public Allies. It was especially special to write with younger folks and witness the ways they are growing into leadership in their communities. Later that evening, we got to have a sazerac with Ava and the now-newly-minted-Dr. Lee Abbott, friends from back in Jennifer's Milwaukee days. One afternoon, we walked the length of St. Bernard Avenue and got a glimpse of the diversity and the joy and the struggles that make up New Orleans. And later we almost got vomited on by an over-eager consumer of NOLA beverages—a little too authentic view of life in a tourist town.

Tuscaloosa, AL

If Jennifer were writing this unsupervised, this entry would read: BABY MAX! The cutest, most charming, delightful, heartwarming, and brilliant baby who ever lived!!!! BABY MAX! But she's not, so ...



Thanks to [A.M. O'Malley](#) (aka "Baby Max's mom") for organizing our workshop at the [Tuscaloosa Public Library - Weaver Bolden Branch](#), and to all the participants for going deep even when we were freezing our butts off in the super-Southern air conditioning. We got to be special guests at the monthly [OPP \(Other People's Poems\)](#) event at [Ernest & Hadley Booksellers](#) (where you can buy copies of our chapbooks). It was good

Jennifer wasn't able to memorize Cavafy's "[The City](#)" in time, because somebody else showed up and recited it and it would've been like one of those awkward moments where two people show up at a party wearing the same dress.

A.M. also set us up to do [Poems to Go](#) at the River Market. Frankie is an old pro at writing poems off the cuff for strangers, but A.M. and Jennifer were nervous beginners. We got it done!

And thanks to [A.M. O'Malley](#) and [Grant Gerald Miller](#) (Baby Max's parents!) and Baby Max (Baby Max!) for hosting us and feeding us (especially for accommodating Frankie's pescatarian diet wherein she only eats fish feet) and delighting us with walks in the woods and late-night cooking shows.

Memphis, TN

After a bus trip from Tuscaloosa to Jackson, MS, to Memphis, we took a couple days off to do pretty much nothing. We did however spend a lot of time trying to come up with tourism board-worthy slogans for the horrible status of the sidewalks in this otherwise lovely town. "Come for the sidewalks, stay for the orthopedic surgery!" and "Memphis: A Sidewalk on the Wild Side!" While some of the sidewalks looked like the broken glaciers of a climate-changed Arctic, some were



downright philosophical. I think it's safe to say that both Jennifer and Frankie regret not getting to the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, but at this point in our travels, the long walks to get to the grocery store to feed ourselves were about all we could handle. We needed to recuperate!

Grayslake, IL

While not strictly part of the Official Plant the Seed Tour™, Jennifer was the guest of the visiting author program at [College of Lake County](#)—an event that fit in nicely with our tour itinerary.

Thanks to Robin Kacel for inviting Jennifer to read from [Meet Me Halfway](#) and to lead a workshop on character motivation for the campus community.



Milwaukee, WI

The devastating Romaine Lettuce Recall of 2018 may have kept lunch from being delivered by the planned provider, but the fearless participants of the Milwaukee Plant the Seed workshop soldiered on. We had a powerful day of laughter and vulnerability (and, eventually, lunch thanks to the incredible staff of [Rise and Grind](#)), hosted by Sarah Noble of The BeNoble Group at the [Sojourner Family Peace Center](#).

Thanks to Peter Blewett for putting us up (and then putting up with us when our stay was extended by an epic April snowstorm). And to Frankie's mama for Brunch.

Minneapolis, MN

In Minneapolis we had a cozy workshop in the community meeting room/art gallery of the radical bookstore [Boneshaker Books](#). We are so inspired by and grateful for the existence of this radical, collectively run, independent community bookstore that is a meaningful resource for many, including the Women's Prison Book Project which puts together mailings of books to women in prison all across the United States and operates out of the Boneshaker space.

We were both taken by all the infrastructure in the city for bicyclists! Bike super highway weaving all through the city! If there was any point on the tour we wanted our bikes (and there were many), this was it.

The next night, there was a full house for our reading at [Moon Palace Books](#) with [Raki Kopernik](#) and [Miriam McNamara](#). (Miriam read from her queer pirate YA novel, *The Unbinding of Mary Reade*, which is coming out on June 19!)

Thank you to Amber Schmidt for hosting us and driving us all over the place and feeding us yummy vegan tacos. And thanks to Ami Voeltz-Schakel for escorting us on outings to places like Minnehaha Falls and pizza!

Madison, WI

In Madison, we were hosted by friends at the [Syntropy Coop house](#), where our attempts at workshop planning were interrupted by this cuddly and possibly pregnant cat the Syntropy folks had rescued from the recent snowstorm. Despite the interruption, the workshop at [Arts + Literature Laboratory](#) went wonderfully. Thanks to Rita Mae Reese of ALL for welcoming us to one of Madison's premier spaces for artistic exploration and to Debbie Rasmussen for hosting us at Syntropy. For Frankie who recently left the commune, being in the presence of a 6 burner industrial stove and a fridge and pantry filled with shared food and being welcomed to the table for a shared meal, landing at Syntropy was an extra special spot for a just-left-the-commune spirit to be. Thank you also to [Deena](#) for her dear friendship and for



feeding us and walking with us to show us the best walk path routes that google never could.



Other Thanks

Thanks to Marnie McMullin for the use of an extraordinary backpack. And to Rachel Rebman for getting said backpack to Jennifer before setting off on her own adventures. And to the Amtrak network. (If you'd like to support your itinerant poets and the planet by promoting a 21st-century rail network in this country, [get involved here.](#))

Thanks for joining us on this adventure. Please stay in touch! We are grateful for you. We like you!

Xoxoxoxoxoxox,
frankie and Jennifer