

Allyn Gaestel — Extended bio

I am a writer, artist, scholar and curator, interested in liberation and human divinity. I find you beautiful.

I was born in Los Angeles. My childhood was dark, but I danced my way to freedom in the forests and the nave of my father's church. Endless gratitude and respect for my Chi and the journey.

I first lived internationally in Djenné, Mali in 2007. I won honors from Haverford College for my Political Science thesis based on personal research in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I also minored in French, studied Philosophy extensively and studied photography at Haverford and the University of Pennsylvania. As a student I was editor for the Center for Peace and Global Citizenship's magazine *Issues*. I underwent trainings in *solidarity not charity* with the Common Ground Collective in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and attended the School of the Americas Watch vigil in Georgia.

I started my career as a United Nations Correspondent in New York, then lived in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, where I was a special correspondent for the LA Times, a stringer for Reuters and CNN, a regular contributor to the Atlantic, and also freelanced for other outlets.

I have also worked in The Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Mauritania, Togo, China, India, Nepal, France, Mexico, Cuba, Malaysia, Rwanda, Kenya, The US, The Dominican Republic and the Bahamas. My reportage, in retrospect, was a way to //see everything and then change my way of seeing, a bit like this//. My questions focused on human dignity, structural, physical, spiritual and emotional violence, inequality, complex social issues, health and spirituality. I listened to countless wise Vodou Houngans, Catholic Bishops, Sufi Imams, Ayurvedic monks, Hindu scholars, Celestial prophets and healers of various modalities as I marveled at our beauty and pondered our interconnectivity and the layers of our world.

Publications include *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Guernica*, *The Atlantic*, *Longreads*, *The Atavist*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Very Vary Veri of the Harvard School of Design*, *The Berlin Quarterly*, *Riot Material*, *The Guardian*, *Al Jazeera*, *National Geographic*, *The Washington Post*, *NPR*, *Foreign Policy Association*, *CNN*, *Reuters*, *YNaija*, *The Common*, *Nataal*, *France 24*, *PRI*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *Fractal Revista Cuatrimestral*, *[applied] Foreign Affairs Design Lab at the University of the Applied Arts in Vienna*, *ETH Zurich Center for Security Studies*, *Intense Art Magazine*, *Moon Man Magazine*, *Dust Magazine*, *Happening Arts*, *Litro*, etc.

In 2015 I was named one of the top journalists working on women's health in the world by Women Deliver and a top journalist on aid and development by Humanosphere.

I reported and field produced documentary and conceptual art videos for Al Jazeera, the Guardian, and Metrozones Institute for critical urban research, and an award-winning short for the New York Times.

I have earned grants and fellowships from The Whiting Foundation, The Pulitzer Center, The International Reporting Project, The International Women's Media Foundation, The Fund for Investigative Journalism, The Carter Center, The Kaiser Family Foundation, the United Nations Foundation, the National Press Foundation, The Fuller Project for International Reporting, The Institute of Current World Affairs, The Heinrich Boll Foundation and The William Penn Foundation.

I had a lengthy, intentional transition out of journalism after encountering the profound limitations, racism and inherent violence embedded in the frameworks of the field. I wrote and spoke and gave interviews on this awakening throughout the process.

I now write on art, literature, conceptual essays and fiction.

My essays have been awarded the Stack Magazine awards for best original non-fiction and shortlisted for a One World Media Award.

Residencies awarded include [Playa](#), [Ucross Foundation](#) and [Est-Nord-Est Art Residency](#).

I make art photographs and have exhibited internationally including at [GfZK The Museum of Contemporary Art in Leipzig](#), Germany, [Kunstlerhaus Mousonturm](#) in Frankfurt, Germany, the [Bauhaus Museum](#) in Weimar, Germany, Espaco Saracura in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, [Haverford College](#) in Philadelphia, and [The Treehouse](#) Experimental Art Space in Lagos, Nigeria. My photographs have been published widely including in *The Atlantic*, *Guernica*, *Happening Arts*, *The Berlin Quarterly*, *Fractal Magazine*, and many others, and are held in private collections in Portland, Paris, Nairobi, New York, Lagos, etc.

I am exuberantly pursuing a Masters in Literary, Musical and Visual Thought in the Division of Philosophy, Art and Critical Thought at the European Graduate School where I am studying with Fred Moten, Manthia Diawara, Catherine Malabou, Daniel Birnbaum and other beloveds. I am also grateful to study writing with Sabrina Orah Mark at the Fine Arts Work Center and in independent workshops. I studied contemporary art history in seminars at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, and am studying curation at the Salzburg Academy of Fine Arts.

I also consult for arts organizations, UN agencies, foundations, think tanks, academic institutes and non profits on writing and editing projects.

I am a juror for residencies at Playa and fellowships from the Carter Center Mental Health reporting project and an advisor for young journalists through the Pulitzer Center. I ran The Luminous Lagos House, an informal artist residency/intentional community in Lagos from 2016 to 2020 before handing ownership over to Nigerian artists. I engage regularly and enthusiastically with students in schools and universities. I give public lectures, visit classrooms, facilitate workshops and engage in small group discussions and one on one mentoring with lots of love—some relationships continue for years. I have been invited to numerous global conferences and forums including the Skoll forum at Oxford, the International Family Planning Conference at the African Union in Addis Ababa, The International AIDS Conference in Vienna, and many others.

I have curated and collaborated with numerous artists to hone and elevate their practice and develop textual articulations and voice. I facilitated an exhibition of Haitian artists at Culture Fix gallery in the Lower East Side, NYC. I wrote the catalogue text for Modupeola Fadugba's installation which won the Grand Prize at the Dak'art Biennale. I curated an exhibition of women artists at the Ford Foundation in Lagos, among many other projects.

I am also a Yoga Alliance RYT 200 certified yoga teacher, and have done advanced studies in Ashtanga with David Garrigues, in Vinyasa with John and Diana Vitarelli, and in Kundalini with Hari Kaur and Siri Rishi.

I am certified as a domestic violence counselor, and a DONA certified doula and have worked in harm reduction public health programs in Philadelphia, New York and Dakar. I started a women's drop-in night at Prevention Point Philadelphia in 2009, that continues to this day. A student I taught how to turn on a computer in a technology course I initiated in Mali in 2008 is now getting a masters in computer science.

I have learned Latin, French, Haitian Kreyol, Wolof, Hindi and a bit of Spanish, though some of these languages are dormant now.

Pronouns: //post duality lies the flow of the spirit, alxumdulilah// ((they//nous//us//all//yes))