

Friends of LitHop,

I am writing to announce that LitHop, after some serious deliberation, will continue. We are, however, going to take 2019 off for capacity building. What began as a dream became a literary event we look forward to, thoroughly enjoy, and learn from each year. For a number of reasons, though, we need to take a one-year hiatus, and we would like to share why.

Since 2016, LitHop has brought close to five thousand literature lovers, readers, writers, and curious festival goers to Fresno's Tower District for our all-day festival. LitHop features over 40 events in a single day—over 150 writers of all ages, backgrounds, publication levels, and professions. Through the hard work and dedication of our all-volunteer staff, we have created something we're proud of, and we hope you have enjoyed it. In each of our three years, over 55% of our readings were by women. We have had middle school readers, high school readers, graduate students, first time readers, veterans, retirees, LGBTQ groups, major literary prize winners, and readers from almost every racial demographic in the city. This was done with intention, and we have been inspired by these important voices.

Each year, we grow. We also learn. We take inventory of what did not go as well as we would like, where we can do better, and what we can improve. We also want to build capacity in the following areas: a board of advisors, event day book sales, merchandise, and developing funding sources. We also want to build out our volunteer staff, as last year's LitHop was organized with a core staff of three people in addition to ten event day volunteers, which will need to expand in the future as LitHop has grown in wonderful ways that require more infrastructure. In short, this one-year hiatus will allow us to focus on sustainability. We want LitHop to last.

In our year away, we hope LitHop attendees will support the many fantastic literary organizations in our beautiful city, including but not limited to The Fresno Poets' Association and the Fresno State MFA Program, The Inner Ear, Fresno Women Read, Fresno Women Writers of Color, and local and independent bookstores such as Hart's Haven and A Book Barn, and all of our wonderful venues that have hosted LitHop. We hope you will keep writing, reading, and creating. We hope you will buy a book or two from our fabulous past readers.

For now, then, thank you—truly—for your support of LitHop. We are proud of it and we have enjoyed it, and we hope you have, too. There are so many people who help make LitHop happen, but two individuals in particular whose countless hours, hard work, and patience really make LitHop go: Director Juan Luis Guzmán and Marketing Director Lisa Herrick, thank you. To our volunteers, staff, venues, readers, and audience members, thank you so much. We love this city, its writers and readers, its bravery and imagination, and we are committed to continuing

LitHop, improving where we can, and bringing people together through the written word. Until we return, we'd love to hear from you. We welcome your comments or your e-mails (lithopfresno@gmail.com). We wish you a happy new year full of good books, good health, and good luck.

See you in 2020.

Sincerely,

Lee Herrick
Founder, LitHop