



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS – POETRY READINGS 2016 WOODY GUTHRIE FESTIVAL THEME: “Don’t Kill My Baby and My Son” *DEADLINE: April 30, 2016*

Woody Guthrie, born in Okemah, Oklahoma, was a champion of the disenfranchised, the minorities and the working class, a colorful and beloved folk hero. He was part of a primitive tradition, carried through the ages by common people to express their joy and anger and frustrations through music.

Woody Guthrie is a patron saint of American rebelliousness, still causing trouble posthumously, inspiring generations of singer-songwriters-poets, and all those who feel constrained by conformity. His work is known worldwide. But Woody Guthrie was more than a balladeer, more than a songster, more than a poet, more than the “entertainer” he often portrayed. He was a radical socialist activist on behalf of workers, the poor, and the disenfranchised. He was a Socialist, at times a Communist. **He was enraged by the inequality, the bigotry, the injustice and the oppression he saw in this country.**

This year’s theme, “Don’t Kill My Baby and My Son,” taken from Woody’s song about the lynching in Okemah on May 25, 1911 of Laura Nelson, and her 13-year-old son, Lawrence, is as relevant today in these times of racial tension and violence, police brutality, and acts of terror as it was in Woody’s time. Indeed, what might Woody say about the state of the nation if he were around today?

As part of the Woody Guthrie Folk Festival in Okemah, Oklahoma, July 13-17, 2016, a group of poets will be selected to read their poetry on Saturday afternoon, July 16, 2016 in Okemah. (“Woody Poets” have been doing this since 2005.) Poets may also be invited to participate in events in Oklahoma City on Friday evening, July 15, in Tulsa at the Woody Guthrie Center on Sunday, July 17, and possibly other venues throughout the year.

“Our goal is to memorialize in poetry the history and culture of working people and to perpetuate the ideals, goals of equality for the working class, and themes that Woody Guthrie espoused and promoted in his art. To raise world consciousness of the labor and populist political movements in the United States and to give commentary on the social and political environment in this 16th year of the 21st Century, as Woody Guthrie might see it.” – from Dorothy Alexander, Village Books Press

Poets are invited to submit up to three poems that reflect (in a poetic way) any themes connected to Woody Guthrie’s work. Examples include immigration issues, environmental concerns, racial and social justice, and the distribution of wealth, labor, and power. Poems will be selected by a **panel of poets and editors** selected by **Jessica Isaacs**, coordinator of the 12th Annual Woody Guthrie Poets Readings. Preference is for poems that have NOT been read at previous Woody Festivals. Readers chosen for the Okemah reading and for the Oklahoma City and Tulsa readings will be notified on or before June 1, 2016. It is our goal to afford as many poets as possible an opportunity to participate in celebrating the art and life of Woody Guthrie! Tell us if you CANNOT be in Okemah on July 16th! **Due to time constraints, only those poets who have submitted by the deadline and have been accepted by the committee will be allowed to read at the Okemah reading and other venues.**

Send poems in email attachment (MS Word) to Jessica Isaacs
WoodyGuthriePoets_2016@yahoo.com, along with a short (50 words or less) bio.

Note: We will post more information about the readings on the Woody Guthrie Poets Facebook Page as the details are arranged. Please stay tuned!

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