LIFE

UCONN CREATIVE WRITING HOLDS ANNUAL BENEFIT READING



Author and poet Luisa Caycedo-Kimura read selected poems from her 2025 book "All Were Limones," at the UConn Creative Sustenance Benefit Reading at the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry on Nov. 11. The book won the Hillary Tham Capital Collection competition.

PHOTO BY COLIN MITCHELL, CONTRIBUTOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

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The University of Connecticut Creative Writing Program held its annual Creative Sustenance Benefit Reading at the Ballard Institute and Museum of Puppetry on Wednesday, featuring author and poet Luisa Caycedo-Kimura. The event solicited donations for the Covenant Soup Kitchen in Willimantic.

Caycedo-Kimura read selected poems from her 2025 book "All Were Limones," winner of the Hillary Tham Capital Collection competition. Poems from the book explore topics from both her childhood and adulthood; her immigration from Colombia to New York as a child and her mother's death, which happened when she was an adult.

Nestled in the poems were words in Spanish, and Caycedo-Kimura explained what everything meant to the audience before reading.

Sean Frederick Forbes, the director of Creative Writing for the English department at UConn and the organizer of the event, met Caycedo-Kimura in 2011 during the Connecticut Poetry Circuit and decided that her new book would make for a good reading this year.

"We sort of had this long-time relationship of sharing poems and going to each other's readings," Forbes said. "I like to bring Connecticut-based poets to events like this that are supporting something that is for a Connecticut community, like the Covenant Soup Kitchen in Willimantic."

In addition to his personal connection with Caycedo-Kimura, Forbes holds a connection to the Covenant Soup Kitchen.

"There was a time where I was effectively homeless for two days because my lease had ended in one apartment, and it was two days before I could move into another one," he said. "I was able to go to the Covenant Soup Kitchen and get all of the things I needed, and they never turned me away."

The event's end goal being to garner donations for the soup kitchen, Forbes hoped to build a connection between creativity and sustenance with the event.

"Having these aspects of creativity and sustenance, they seemed to go hand in hand," he said. "We were thinking about sustenance in terms of food, providing warmth, providing clothing, but then we're also thinking of language and the arts as providing that essential sustenance that keeps people going in times of distress."

Students attending the event resonated with this sentiment.

"I think you can find, even if you're not professionally working in the artistic space, ways to incorporate art into your life, and give your life meaning and fulfillment," said Fiona Berry, a fifth-semester molecular and cellular biology student at UConn.

Also an associate professor in residence at UConn, Forbes invited many of his students to the reading not only to bring awareness to the soup kitchen, but also to gain insight from Caycedo-Kimura's style and artistry.

"Luisa's work is so narrative," he said. "A lot of students think that poetry has to have formulas and symbols that have to be interpreted, but poetry can be complex and narrative at the same time."

Berry said that she wanted to study Caycedo-Kimura's work more following the reading.

"The interweaving of Spanish and English intrigued me," she said. "So I'd love to read more of that."