



Poetry That Revolutionizes Hearts and Minds

Conversations on Poetry at The Bay Area Book Festival

Layli Long Soldier, Matthew Zapruder, C.S. Giscombe, and more, along with Brad Gooch on Rumi and performances and workshops from Youth Speaks

June 3-4, 2017

Literary activism, our theme this year, involves embracing and promoting stories and perspectives from many cultures and regions around the world. Our **poetry** programming reflects the nuanced and numerous ways poets grapple with issues that divide our country, such as immigration, race, gender, sexuality, and who gets to be an American. The festival also presents a session associated with the SF Chronicle's new "State Lines" column in its Sunday book coverage.

Highlights of [The Bay Area Book Festival](#)'s sessions on **poetry** this year, which will take place in venues in downtown Berkeley, include:

Speak Your Truth: a Youth Speaks Writing & Performance Workshop — Teens! Come kick it with your peers and tell the stories that sit heavy on your chest and rattle your heart like the inside of a stolen spray can. Youth Speaks poet mentors will be on hand to help you express your truths in this free writing and performance workshop. All levels welcome and encouraged in this safe space. *Saturday, June 3, 1pm at Berkeley Public Library - Community Meeting Room. Sponsored by Youth Speaks.*

Then, on June 4, flex those newfound skillz at the **Under 21 Open-Mic Night** (3pm, at Cornerstone), open to all emerging emcees under 21. No censorship, all love.

Who Is American Poetry? Four Poets on Citizenship and Engagement in Turbulent Times — *With Charif Shanahan, Layli Long Soldier, Michael Shewmaker, moderated by Matthew Zapruder.* The landscape of contemporary poetry has never been so multitudinous, and the question of who gets to be called American has become suddenly urgent. Four poets discuss their work and what it means to be writing in America—as immigrants, as citizens, as humans—today. *Sunday, June 4, 3:15pm at the Hotel Shattuck Plaza - Boiler Room*

State Lines: California's New Poets — *With Rebecca Gaydos, C.S. Giscombe, Jacques Rancourt, Mai Der Vang, and Arisa White, with John McMurtrie introducing.* Acclaimed poet and Cal professor C. S. Giscombe introduces four emerging poets who explore, in their

innovative verse, the issues of our day, from immigration to race to gender and sexuality, from questions of empathy to where we find beauty in this divided country. This new generation builds on a rich Californian tradition that, like the state itself, sets the terms for the country at large. *Saturday, June 3, 3:15pm at the David Brower Center.*

Further, a session about one of the most famous poets in the world:

A Journey into the Life of Rumi — *With Brad Gooch and Michael David Lukas.* “Everyone is born once. I have been born many times,” wrote Rumi, the beloved Persian poet, whose words often draw comparisons to Shakespeare. But who was the person behind the poems? And why does a fairly obscure 13th-century mystic continue to captivate contemporary audiences? Brad Gooch, formidable biographer and bestselling author of *Smash Cut*, *Flannery*, and *City Poet*, brilliantly brings the legend to life, vividly coloring in his time and place—imagine trying to write erotic poetry under the siege of Genghis Khan—and reminding us that the power of poetry transcends time and place, much like Rumi himself. *Saturday, June 3, 1:30pm at Berkeley City College - Auditorium. Sponsored by Society for Art and Cultural Heritage of India (SACHI).*

For other book festival sessions, [see the full schedule](#).

Festival speakers are available for interviews by credentialed members of the press via email or Skype in advance of the festival, or in person over the weekend event. Outlet must be identified and assignment secured before the interview.

The festival logo and other images are [available here](#), and author photos are available by request. Please contact Anna Pulley, anna@bayboofest.org.