



PRESS CONTACT

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Acclaimed Fiction and Non-Fiction Writers Discuss Black Identity in American Literature and Take on Some of the Most Pressing Issues Facing the Black Community Today

Join us on May 4 and 5 in Downtown Berkeley, CA

Participating authors are available for interview

Berkeley, CA, April 3, 2019—Celebrating its fifth anniversary, this year's Bay Area Book Festival—May 4th and 5th in downtown Berkeley—offers a forum for some of the most trenchant voices on critical issues facing the Black community and celebrates noted Black writers. Dozens of authors come together for two days of probing conversation and reflection on race in 21st century life and literature. They will explore everything from the crisis of mass incarceration, to the craft of writing complex characters of color, to the intersection of capitalism and slavery.

Authors take part in a larger festival including 250 notable speakers across 100+ literary sessions. The festival expects to attract audiences of 25,000 people.

"We are thrilled to bring together some of today's most eloquent voices writing about race, identity, justice, and related issues. From its inception, the Festival has explored these concerns, but this year's event is the strongest yet. In addition to offering interviews and panels, we've paired writers in ways to spark creative conversation, for instance between Ishmael Reed and Morgan Parker, and Esi Edugyan and Tayari Jones," says Cherilyn Parsons, Executive Director and Founder of the Bay Area Book Festival.

Highlights of this year's program includes:

- **Writer to Writer: Ishmael Reed and Morgan Parker.** This cross-generational conversation between two dynamic American writers and cultural critics explores the history and future of the American literary landscape. The legendary Ishmael Reed—MacArthur Genius Fellow, founder of the Before Columbus Foundation, and author of more than 30 books, including his newest "Conjugating Hindi"—sits down with rising literary star Morgan Parker, a National Endowment for the Arts Fellow, Pushcart Prize winner, and author of the new poetry collection "Magical Negro."

Sunday, May 4

3:15-4:30

Brower Center, Goldman Theater

- **The Unbreakable Human Spirit: Albert Woodfox on Survival in Solitary: Albert Woodfox interviewed by Shane Bauer.** One of the "Angola 3," Albert Woodfox endured four decades of solitary confinement for a crime he did not commit. While his story has been profiled by many publications, today we have an opportunity to hear from him directly. From the epilogue of his just-published memoir, "Solitary," come these powerful words: "To those of you who are just entering the world of social struggle, welcome. To those of you who have spent years struggling for human rights and social justice, don't give up. Look at me and see how the strength and determination of the human spirit defies all evil." In our closing keynote session, Woodfox will be interviewed by Mother Jones reporter Shane Bauer, author of "American Prison" and himself a survivor of solitary confinement when he was arrested in Iran and held for two years in the notorious Evin Prison.

Sunday, May 5

5:00-6:15

Freight & Salvage

- **Writer to Writer: Esi Edugyan and Tayari Jones moderated by Caille Millner.** Novelists Esi Edugyan and Tayari Jones both probe racial injustice in their work, and both women have received considerable praise. Edugyan's sweeping, imaginative novel "Washington Black" was named a Top Ten Book of 2018 by the New York Times, and Tayari Jones' "An American Marriage" was an Oprah's Book Club pick for that same year. Edugyan uses magic realism to explore slavery and freedom in a stupendous tale that moves from Barbados to Nova Scotia to England. Jones weaves a devastating tapestry of a modern marriage wrenched apart by a discriminatory American justice system.

Sunday, May 5

11:00-Noon

Chronicle Stage, Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park

- **Prophet of Freedom: Frederick Douglass. David Blight interviewed by Otis R. Taylor Jr.** Frederick Douglass was arguably the most important African American of the nineteenth century, an escaped slave who became the greatest orator of his day and one of the leading abolitionists and writers of the era. Join David Blight, American history scholar and author of the new, definitive biography "Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom," selected as a Top Ten Book of 2018 by the New York Times and numerous other outlets. San Francisco Chronicle columnist Otis R. Taylor, Jr. interviews Blight and helps uncover this towering figure that Blight calls "thoroughly and beautifully human."

Saturday, May 4

1:30 - 2:45

Chronicle Stage, Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park

- **A Stranger's Journey: Race, Identity, and Craft with Reyna Grande, Dickson Lam, Ismail Muhammad, David Mura, moderated by David Roderick.** To write race and ethnicity well, we need the right

tools and the right reading list. Building multidimensional worlds that don't rely on assumptions or defaults takes practice (and guts). Fortunately, master memoirist and creative writing instructor David Mura is here to help. In "A Stranger's Journey: Race, Identity, and Narrative Craft in Writing," Mura delves into how race structures our reality, shaping the way we write and how we expect to be read. He offers techniques and introduces new ways of seeing. Join four writer-teachers of color—**Reyna Grande, Dickson Lam, Ismail Muhammad, and David Mura**—as they unpack the questions of identity that drive their writing, mark the pitfalls of self-exotification, and weigh the rewards of a penning richer, riskier work.

Saturday, May 4

5:00- 6:15

Veterans Memorial Building Auditorium

- **The Business of Brutality: Slavery and the Foundations of Capitalism with David Blight, Stephanie Jones-Rogers, and Caitlin Rosenthal.** Look around. How much of our infrastructure—from roads and bridges to factories and food supplies—was built on the backs of American slaves? Three writer-researchers examine how the brutal history of slavery laid the foundation of American capitalism and shaped today's racial and economic inequality. In "They Were Her Property," Stephanie Jones-Rogers reveals the active role that white women played in the American slave economy. In "Accounting for Slavery," Caitlin Rosenthal examines how elite planters turned their power over enslaved people into a productivity advantage. In "Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom," David Blight investigates the legacy of the escaped slave and abolitionist, who wrote, "The white man's happiness cannot be purchased by the black man's misery." Sponsored by the Stephen M. Silberstein Foundation

Sunday, May 5

1:30-2:45

Shattuck Plaza Hotel, Shattuck Ballroom

- **Notes From A Young Black Chef: Kwame Onwuachi.** Meet the all-star chef whose kitchen wizardry and unique flair for fusion were praised by food critic Bill Addison as "ignited and firing at peak level." In Onwuachi's remarkable culinary coming-of-age story, "Notes From a Young Black Chef," he navigates the unwelcoming world of fine dining as a person of color, competes on Top Chef, and quickly bounces back from the failure of his first restaurant to become the Executive Chef of the wildly popular, D.C.-based Kith and Kin at only 28 years old.

Saturday, May 4

11:00-12:00

Chronicle Stage, Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park

- **Ache, Rage, Rise: Portraits of Race and Gender in Short Fiction with Camille Acker, Jamel Brinkley, Kali Fajardo-Anstine.** Come hear three rising literary stars! From a house party in Brooklyn, to the mountains of southern Colorado, to the rapidly changing streets of the nation's capital, these story collections travel the full trajectory and

vibrate with vivid prose. Jamel Brinkley ("A Lucky Man," finalist for the National Book Award), Camille Acker ("Training School for Negro Girls"), and Kali Fajardo-Anstine ("Sabrina and Corina") have written coming-of-age stories anchored by young characters who are discovering power and loss, learning the rules and how to break them.

Sunday, May 5

3:15-4:30

The Marsh Theater

- **Comic Consciousness: Graphic Novelists Tackle Cultural Identity And Crisis with Nora Krug, Edgardo Miranda Rodriguez, Juliana "Jewels" Smith.** The book world can feel quite snobby at times, but comics don't care where you come from. Unintimidating and inviting, comics can open the door to tough conversations about gentrification, genocide, natural disasters, and other uncomfortable truths. Armed with humor, wit, and vulnerability, writer-graphic novelists Nora Krug ("Belonging"), Edgardo Miranda-Rodriguez ("Ricanstruction"), and Juliana "Jewels" Smith ("(H)afrocentric Comics") dive into the task of turning their most naked fears and haunting questions about survival and belonging into compelling visual storytelling. With the support of the initiative "Wunderbar Together," initiated by the German Federal Foreign Office, the Goethe Institut, and the Federation of German Industries (BDI); the Goethe-Institut San Francisco; and Goethe-Institut's translation support program "Books First."

Saturday, May 4

11:45-1:00

The Marsh Theater

See all Festival events in our [general press release](#).

THE BAY AREA BOOK FESTIVAL

When

Saturday, May 4, 10 a.m.-9:30 p.m., and Sunday, May 5, 10 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Where

Downtown Berkeley, California

The Outdoor Fair is in Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park

Indoor Festival events at various locations. See [Schedule](#) for more info.

Ticket Information

Outdoor venues, including the San Francisco Chronicle Stage, are free.

Guaranteed seating in indoor programs can be accessed through Priority Tickets at \$10/session. A General Admission Wristband allows space-available access to all sessions all weekend for only \$15. Go to www.baybookfest.org or find box offices on site. Youth under 18 can attend for free. A Friends program baybookfest.org/contribute-2/ allows attendees to receive wristbands and Priority Tickets while supporting the nonprofit festival.

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