



PRESS CONTACT

For more information or to arrange an interview:

Lorna Garano

510-759-6655

lorna@baybookfest.org

Bay Area Book Festival Takes on the Perils of Immigration in Trump's America, Celebrates the Vibrant Movement for Immigrant Rights & Highlights the Complex Immigrant Experience

Join us on May 4 and 5, Downtown Berkeley

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—will present 250 notable authors in 100+ literary sessions and expects to attract audiences of 25,000 people. From its inception, the Festival has tackled critical social issues. This year the Festival brings together some of today's most insightful writers on immigration. They will discuss the plight of immigrants under the Trump administration, grapple with the best strategies for the vibrant immigrant rights movement, and help us envision a just and inclusive future. Authors include journalists and scholars who analyze contemporary immigration policy, as well as writers who use fiction and literary nonfiction to humanize the struggle of immigrants and explore the complexities of immigrant identity.

"The Bay Area Book Festival is known worldwide for its activist stance in exploring urgent social issues. Our region also is home to a diverse immigrant population. We want to provide a forum for eloquent voices addressing immigration issues today," says Cherilyn Parsons, Founder and Executive Director of the Bay Area Book Festival.

Highlights include:

- **Us vs. Them: Refugees, Asylum, and the Politics of Borderlands with Aaron Bobrow-Strain, Jonathan Freedman, Steven Mayers, J.J. Mulligan Sepúlveda, Eileen Truax, moderated by Sara Campos**

Saturday, May 4, 10:00-11:45

Berkeley City College - Auditorium

Who is worthy of our compassion? Every day more Central American refugees arrive at the U.S.-Mexico border desperate for asylum. Our government greets them with armed guards and tear gas. Hearing human stories behind the headlines can change how we talk about immigration. Aaron Bobrow-Strain ("The Death and Life of Aida Hernández"), Steven Mayers and Jonathan Freedman ("Solito, Solita"), J.J. Mulligan Sepúlveda ("No Human Is Illegal"), and Eileen Truax ("We Built The Wall") examine

the history behind this human rights crisis and tell the urgent stories of those who have experienced it firsthand.

- **Dear America: Jose Antonio Vargas interviewed by Kate Campbell**

Saturday, May 4, 3:00-4:15 PM

Chronicle Stage, Martin Luther King Jr. Civic Center Park

Jose Antonio Vargas was sixteen when, signing up to take a driver's test at his local DMV, he discovered his green card was fake. Now he's a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, Emmy-nominated filmmaker, and the founder of Define American, an organization that fights anti-immigrant hate through the power of storytelling. But his future still hangs in the balance. In "Dear America," Vargas divulges how he came out first as gay and then as undocumented, reflecting on the high cost of hiding from the government and himself (there's a warrant out for his arrest and deportation back to the Philippines). Illuminating the purgatory of fear people without papers are forced to live in and posing questions about passing and the true meaning of citizenship, Vargas urges us to reconsider the assumptions we make.

- **Human Face: Literature That Brings Human Rights To Life with Atia Abawi, Aaron Bobrow-Strain, and Eliot Pattison**

Saturday, May 4, 1:30-2:45 PM

The Magnes Museum

Storytelling can bring depth, humanity, and understanding to the headlines. "A Land of Permanent Goodbyes" depicts a young boy who must escape from war-torn Syria, masterfully told by journalist Atia Abawi, who witnessed the crisis firsthand. In "The Death and Life of Aída Hernandez," Aaron Bobrow-Strain follows an undocumented teen mom and reveals the human consequences of militarizing what was once a more forgiving border. With "Bones of the Earth," Eliot Pattison concludes his mystery series set in Tibet, which he writes about so readers can "understand what it feels like to witness an armed policeman assault a praying monk."

- **The Heart of Hate with Bradley Hart, Bill Ong Hing, Arjun Sethi**

Sunday, May 5, 10:00-11:15 AM

The Brower Center - Tamalpais Room

"No one is born hating another person," Nelson Mandela famously said. "People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate they can be taught to love." With the threat of fascism looming around the world, human rights activist Arjun Singh Sethi ("American Hate"), historian Bradley Hart ("Hitler's American Friends"), and immigration attorney Bill Ong Hing ("American Presidents, Deportations, and Human Rights Violations") reveal the roots of hateful political ideologies in the United States and bear witness to survivors of hate crimes, police violence, mass detention, and deportation. They chart a course for unlearning hatred and bigotry.

- **War Zone: Coming of Age in Times of Conflict with Atia Abawi and e.E. Charlton-Trujillo [Young Adult session]**

Sunday, May 5, 2:15-3:30 PM

Berkeley High School, Florence Schwimmley Little Theater

What do you do when your world is suddenly turned upside down? Growing up is hard enough, but these teen protagonists must cope with loss and navigate violence completely out of their control. Atia Abawi's "A Land of Permanent Goodbyes" follows Tareq, a kid forced to flee his home in war torn Syria. e.E. Charlton-Trujillo's "Fat Angie: Rebel Girl Revolution" features Angie, a high school sophomore mourning the death of her sister in Iraq. The two writers will discuss how they write about teenage trauma and resilience, and why these tough-to-write stories are so valuable to readers who need to find hope within their pages.

- **From Germany into the World: Brave New Literature on Connection and Belonging with Dorothee Elmiger, Katja Petrowskaja, Takis Würger, moderated by Sabine Kieselbach**

Sunday, May 4, 11:45-1:00

Hotel Shattuck Plaza - Boiler Room

Where is my place in the world? Where do I belong? Three distinct voices from Germany and Switzerland explore these questions in their work, all bestsellers in Europe. In "Maybe Esther," Katja Petrowskaja creates a kind of literary family tree, in luminous prose delving into legends and history. Takis Würger's "The Club" is a smoldering story of class, privilege, love, and moral ambiguity, centered around an elite club at Cambridge University. In Dorothee Elmiger's "Shift Sleepers," refugees, workers, inspectors, artists, and ghosts meet in a forest and converse about the meaning of homeland, safety, happiness, and more. Come discover these new voices in translation, one of the most exciting areas in literature today.

- **Let The World Move: Speculative Fiction From the Periphery with Lesley Nneka Arimah, Alice Sola Kim, Carmen Maria Machado, moderated by Namwali Serpell**

Saturday, May 4, 1:30 PM - 2:45 PM

Veterans Memorial Building - Auditorium

"I stood at the border, stood at the edge and claimed it as central," Toni Morrison said, "Claimed it as central, and let the rest of the world move over to where I was." First and second-generation immigrant writers Lesley Nneka Arimah, Alice Sola Kim, Carmen Maria Machado, and Namwali Serpell tackle the mysterious, the wild, the terrifying, and the magical in their speculative fiction. With rich and enthralling work that defies convention, they are creating a cultural shift in the literary landscape.

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. The Friends program baybookfest.org/contribute-2/ allows attendees to receive wristbands and Priority Tickets while supporting the nonprofit festival.

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