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Women Take Center Stage at This Year's Bay Area Book Festival

(And Run Almost Everything Beyond the Curtain Too)

This year's festival will feature some of today's most acclaimed female writers, address issues confronting 21st century women, and pay tribute to some of the most iconic women in literature

Join us on May 4 and 5, Downtown Berkeley.

Participating authors are available for interview.

Berkeley, CA, April 3, 2019—Women, raise your voices! Celebrating its fifth anniversary, this year's Bay Area Book Festival (March 4 and 5) will present 160 notable female authors and speakers, the majority of the event's 250 authors appearing in 100+ literary sessions over the two days of the Festival. The Festival, which takes place in Downtown Berkeley, expects to attract audiences of 25,000 people—many of them women, which is no surprise. Studies consistently show that women read more books than men do.

From panel discussions on mothering (and not mothering), to celebrations of women who changed literature forever, to conversations about how to write complex female characters, the Festival offers women readers two packed days of programming by and for them. Some of the hottest literary names will make appearances, including **Ann Beattie**, **Tayari Jones**, **Carmen Maria Machado**, and **R.O. Kwon**, as well as an author who makes millions of women smile, **Cathy Guisewite**, creator of the beloved comic strip **Cathy**.

The emphasis on female voices continues the Festival's thriving new program called Women Lit, which presents leading female writers at the Festival and in year-round events. Recent speakers have been **Rebecca Traister** and **Gloria Steinem**.

"We've always given special attention to women's voices, which are too often overlooked, especially in serious literature and in reviews and awards. With Women Lit and our many programs this year featuring female authors, we celebrate woman's words, imaginations, brilliance, and power," says Cheryl Parsons, Executive Director and Founder of the Bay Area Book Festival.

Behind the scenes, women are equally well represented. Founded by a woman, BABF is run by a primarily female staff, who direct everything from programming to management, marketing, and ticketing.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- **The Legacy of Adrienne Rich and the Shape of our Feminist Future with Jill Bialosky, Aya de León, Susan Griffin, Nell Painter, Morgan Parker, and moderated by Sandra Gilbert.** "The connections between and among women are the most feared, the most problematic, and the most potentially transforming force on the planet," wrote the legendary poet, essayist, and feminist Adrienne Rich. An early proponent of intersectionality (before the term was coined), Rich's ideas have profoundly shaped feminism. In celebration of "Essential Essays," a new collection of Rich's work edited by poet-scholar Sandra Gilbert, join a panel of trailblazing writers and thinkers—Rich's friends, colleagues, literary and scholarly descendants, and longtime editor—as they pay homage to Rich's legacy and consider her ideas today. Sponsored by Reed Schmidt.
Saturday, May 2
10:00-11:15
Freight & Salvage
- **Worlds of Ursula K. Le Guin: Film and Conversation with Arwen Curry, Annalee Newitz, Kim Stanley Robinson, David Streitfeld.** "Resistance and change often begin in art. Very often in our art, the art of words," said Ursula K. Le Guin in her courageous speech upon receiving the 2014 American National Book Foundation Medal. (She called for literary freedom and condemned unbridled capitalism.) Le Guin's impact on literature can hardly be overstated. Our tribute to Le Guin, who died last year at 88, will start by screening the recent documentary about her life, "The Worlds of Ursula K. Le Guin." A conversation will follow with Arwen Curry, the filmmaker; Annalee Newitz, journalist and author most recently of the novel "Autonomous"; Kim Stanley Robinson, Le Guin's friend and sci-fi legend; and David Streitfeld, reporter and author of the new compilation "Ursula K. Le Guin: The Last Interview and Other Conversations."
Saturday, May 4
7:00-9:30
Freight & Salvage
- **Fierce Femmes with Zoraida Córdova, Anna-Marie McLemore, and Cindy Pon.** No damsels in distress here! These powerful young women protagonists are almost as incredible as the writers who crafted them. Join Zoraida Córdova ("Bruja Born"), Anna Marie McLemore ("Blanca Y Roja"), and Cindy Pon ("Ruse") for a discussion on how their characters use their brains and brujería to devise a way out of serious danger.
Sunday, May 5
11:00-12:15
Florence Schwimmley Little Theater
- **On 21st Century Mothering with Vanessa Hua, Lydia Kiesling, and Dani McClain.** How far will a mother go for her child? In Vanessa Hua's "River of Stars," a mother's love carries her across the ocean and then

some, all in the name of protecting her baby. In Lydia Kiesling's "The Golden State," a mother takes her young child on a road trip that defies the conventions of the genre. In "We Live for the We," Dani McClain explores the power and responsibility of her own love as a new mother to a Black child in America. These three authors explore the voracious worry, stubborn hope, and deep love of 21st century motherhood.

Sunday, May 5

11:45-1:00

Chronicle Stage

- **On Not Mothering with Sheila Heti, Emilie Pine, Grace Talusan.** Whether it's by choice or chance, not mothering is still considered taboo. Talked about in hushed tones and regarded with pity or disdain, women who don't mother are made to feel like failures. But what are the windows of possibility opened up by a child-free life? What other kinds of nurturing can happen in its place? Brazen in their vulnerability, Sheila Heti ("Motherhood"), Grace Talusan ("The Body Papers"), and Emilie Pine ("Notes to Self") break the silence on not mothering, addressing the assumptions, stigmas, and surprising rewards head-on. With the support of the Consulate General of Canada, San Francisco/Silicon Valley and Culture Ireland.

Sunday, May 5

11:45-1:00

Shattuck Plaza Hotel, Shattuck Ballroom

- **Writer to Writer: Lacy Johnson and Carmen Maria Machado.** In our Writer to Writer series, two writers who are fans of each other's work come together for a conversation. Carmen Maria Machado, National Book Award finalist and author of "Her Body and Other Parties" and the forthcoming memoir "In the Dream House," sits down with Lacy Johnson, author of "The Other Side" and "The Reckonings," which was hailed by The Millions as "a collection that converses with itself and the reader, asking us to question our beliefs and our roles in a system that perpetuates violence." The two discuss how they navigate their way through the thorny narrative terrain of abuse, discovering agency and power in the process.

Sunday, May 5

3:15-4:30

Magnes Museum

- **Critic's Choice: Three Young 21st Century Writers Rocking the Literary World with Jamel Brinkley, R.O. Kwon, Namwali Serpell, moderated by Jane Ciabattari.** Get ready for some serious literary talent, all based in the Bay Area. Writer and books columnist Jane Ciabattari, former president of the National Book Critics Circle, has highlighted three authors for your attention. Jamel Brinkley was a finalist for the National Book Award with "A Lucky Man," a collection of stories about men and boys that explores race and class. Like Brinkley, our next author, R.O. Kwon, was a finalist for the NBCC's John Leonard Award for a first book; "The Incendiaries" burns with keen, spare prose that tells the

story of a college student caught up in a religious cult. Namwali Serpell, a winner of the Caine Prize for African writing, has penned an electrifying debut, "The Old Drift"—an epic story of a small African nation and a panorama of history, fairytale, romance and science fiction. All three writers will sign your books after the talk!

Saturday, May 4

11:45 AM - 1:00 PM

Berkeley City College Auditorium

- **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

- **From Captivity to Power: A Remarkable Story of Women Rising Up, Julia Flynn Siler interviewed by Lauren Schiller.** In her third book, journalist Julia Flynn Siler shows that women have always fought for each other, even a century before #MeToo. In "The White Devil's Daughters: The Fight Against Slavery in San Francisco's Chinatown," Siler profiles the women who surmounted racial and class barriers to free sex-trafficked Chinese immigrants at the turn of the nineteenth century. Grounded in historical research, the book is an exhilarating tale of raids, bomb threats, and the 1906 San Francisco fire. Siler will be interviewed by Lauren Schiller, host of Inflection Point, the weekly radio program and podcast from KALW and PRX about women rising up. Co-presented with Inflection Point.

Sunday, May 5

1:30-2:45

Brower Center, Tamalpais Room

- **Cathy! The Celebrated Comic Strip Creator, Cathy Guisewite interviewed by Leah Garchik.** She's baaa-ACK! More than forty years after the debut of her widely syndicated and nationally adored daily comic strip "Cathy," Cathy Guisewite returns with her signature wit and warmth in the new book "Fifty Things That Aren't My Fault," a funny, wise, poignant, and incredibly honest collection of essays about being a woman in what she lovingly calls "the panini generation." Join Guisewite in conversation with Leah Garchik, beloved Features columnist at the San Francisco Chronicle, for a discussion on navigating times of transition with humor and heart.

Sunday, May 5

2:00-3:00
Chronicle Stage

- **Goddesses, Grandmothers, and the Everyday Divine with Hallie Iglebart Austen and Vijaya Nagarajan, and moderated by Arisika Razak.** Start your morning by celebrating the Divine Feminine, as millions of women do around the globe. In "The Heart of the Goddess: Art, Myth and Meditations of the World's Sacred Feminine," scholar-practitioner Hallie Iglehart Austen shares female imagery throughout time, challenging dominant narratives about human nature. In "Feeding A Thousand Souls: Women, Ritual and Ecology in India," Professor Vijaya Nagarajan explores the ritual of Tamil women who rise each dawn to create kolams, rice-flour designs that honor Hindu goddesses and incorporate concepts of beauty, mathematics, generosity, and even climate chaos. Moderator Arisika Razak, professor at the California Institute for Integral Studies (CIIS), is a healer, ritualist, spiritual dancer, and educator who practices an eclectic mix of Earth-based spiritual traditions. Sponsored by the California Institute of Integral Studies.

Sunday, May 5

10:00-11:15

Magnes Museum

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

MORE ABOUT WOMEN LIT

In 2018, the Bay Area Book Festival launched Women Lit, a membership-based literary society that presents female-identified authors in public events and fosters literary community among Bay Area women. Past Women Lit guests include Gloria Steinem, Leila Slimani, Rebecca Traister, and Khalida Brohi. Go to womenlit.org for more details.

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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