THE 9TH ANNUAL

SONOMA VALLEY AUTHORS FESTIVAL



FESTIVAL SCHEDULE →

MAY 1-3, 2026 | FAIRMONT SONOMA MISSION INN

COVER AND INTERIOR ART BY CRAIG FRAZIER

FRIDAY | MAY 1		PAVILION MAIN STAGE	SONOMA VALLEY ROOM	KENWOOD ROOM	BREEZEWAY LAWN	BOOKSTORE PATIO	BOOKSTORE
9:30 — 5:30	FESTIVAL BOOKSTORE OPEN						OPEN
10:00 — 6:00	FESTIVAL REGISTRATION OPEN				REGISTRATION/INFO		
12:00 — 1:00	LUNCH				LUNCH		
1:15 — 1:30	FESTIVAL WELCOME	FESTIVAL OPENING REMARKS					
1:30 — 2:15	**KEYNOTE SESSION ONE**	**BILLY COLLINS**					
2:15 — 3:00	**KEYNOTE SESSION TWO**	**COLUM McCANN**					
3:00 — 3:15	BREAK						
3:15 — 4:00	**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**	**MARIA SEMPLE WITH JEFFREY BROWN**	**MEENA AHAMED WITH LIAQUAT AHAMED**	**BRYAN BURROUGH**			
4:00 — 4:15	BREAK						
4:15 — 5:00	**KEYNOTE SESSION THREE**	**RICK ATKINSON**					
5:00 — 5:30	CLOSING REMARKS | BOOK SIGNING	CLOSING REMARKS				BOOK SIGNING	
7:15 — 9:00	AUTHOR/SPONSOR DINNER	**JAY ALEXANDER | ILLUSIONIST**					
9:15 — 10:00	**FIRESIDE POETRY READING WITH BILLY COLLINS AND JEFFREY BROWN**				**POETRY READING**		
SATURDAY | MAY 2							
7:30 — 5:30	FESTIVAL BOOKSTORE OPEN						OPEN
7:30 — 8:45	BREAKFAST				BREAKFAST		
8:00 — 8:45	**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**	**ABBAS MILANI**	**TODD PURDUM**	**JAMES WANG**			
9:00 — 9:15	DAY TWO OPENING REMARKS	OPENING REMARKS					
9:15 — 10:00	**KEYNOTE SESSION FOUR**	**DAVE BARRY**					
10:00 — 10:45	**KEYNOTE SESSION FIVE**	**JOHN HONCHARIW**					
10:45 — 11:00	BREAK						
11:00 — 11:45	**KEYNOTE SESSION SIX**	**SONIA PURNELL**					
11:45 — 12:30	**KEYNOTE SESSION SEVEN**	**DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN WITH JAMES STROCK**					
12:30 — 1:00	AUTHOR BOOK SIGNING					BOOK SIGNING	
12:30 — 1:45	LUNCH				LUNCH		
1:45 — 2:30	**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**	**ADMIRAL JAMES STAVRIDIS**	**LIAQUAT AHAMED**	**MICHELLE KAUFMAN**			
2:30 — 2:45	BREAK						
2:45 — 3:30	**KEYNOTE SESSION EIGHT**	**ADMIRAL JAMES STAVRIDIS WITH JAMES STROCK**					
3:30 — 3:45	BREAK						
3:45 — 4:30	**KEYNOTE SESSION NINE**	**STEPHEN KOTKIN**					
4:30 — 5:15	**KEYNOTE SESSION TEN**	**ANDREW ROSS SORKIN WITH JEFFREY BROWN**					
5:15 — 5:45	CLOSING REMARKS | BOOK SIGNING	CLOSING REMARKS				BOOK SIGNING	
9:30 – 10:30	**STARGAZING WITH ALEX FILIPPENKO**				**STARGAZING**		
SUNDAY | MAY 3							
7:30 — 1:30	FESTIVAL BOOKSTORE OPEN						OPEN
7:30 — 8:45	BREAKFAST				BREAKFAST		
8:00 — 8:45	**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**	**LAUREN COYLE ROSEN**	**BARBARA DADDINO**				
9:00 — 9:15	DAY THREE OPENING REMARKS	OPENING REMARKS					
9:15 — 10:00	**KEYNOTE SESSION ELEVEN**	**JEFFREY ROSEN**					
10:00 — 10:45	**KEYNOTE SESSION TWELVE**	**KATIE POLLARD**					
10:45 — 11:15	BREAK/AUTHOR BOOK SIGNING					BOOK SIGNING	
11:15 — 12:00	**BREAKOUT SESSIONS**	**ALEX FILIPPENKO**	**SOYOUNG LEE**	**LIZA GERSHMAN**			
12:00 – 12:15	BREAK						
12:15 — 1:00	**KEYNOTE SESSION THIRTEEN**	**SONIA PURNELL**					
1:00 — 1:30	FESTIVAL CLOSING | BOOK SIGNING	CLOSING REMARKS				BOOK SIGNING	

FESTIVAL PROGRAM GUIDE

2026 SONOMA VALLEY AUTHORS FESTIVAL

MAY 1 – 3

FAIRMONT SONOMA MISSION INN AND SPA

CONTENTS

WELCOME

FESTIVAL FOUNDERS' VISION 1

FESTIVAL EXPERIENCE 2 – 4

FESTIVAL BOOKSTORE 4 – 5

AUTHOR BOOK SIGNING SCHEDULE 6

WELCOME TO SONOMA VALLEY 7

FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, MAY 1 9 – 13

SATURDAY, MAY 2 14 – 22

SUNDAY, MAY 3 23 – 28

AUTHOR & SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES 29 – 61

FESTIVAL ORGANIZATION

FESTIVAL LEADERSHIP 62 – 64

FESTIVAL MODERATORS 65

FESTIVAL TEAM 66

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 67 - 68

STUDENTS DAY

ABOUT STUDENTS DAY 69

STUDENTS DAY AUTHORS & SPEAKERS 70

STUDENTS DAY PARTNER 70

SVAF YOUNG READERS PROGRAM 71

FESTIVAL SPONSORS

FESTIVAL IMPACT 72

FESTIVAL CONTRIBUTORS & SPONSORS 73 – 75

2026 VIRTUAL FESTIVAL 76

MAJOR BENEFACTORS 77 - 85

MEDIA PARTNERS 86 - 91

COMMUNITY PARTNERS 92 - 103

SVAF TEAM 104- 110

FOUNDERS' VISION



GINNY & DAVID FREEMAN

CO-FOUNDERS,
SONOMA VALLEY
AUTHORS FESTIVAL

Welcome to the ninth annual Sonoma Valley Authors Festival! We are thrilled that you have chosen to spend the weekend with us as we engage with some of the world's most talented authors, speakers, and thought leaders. We have specially curated these three days to present a variety of literary genres and topics, from novels to poetry, history, geopolitical issues, and non-fiction to the latest advances in science, technology, and medicine. Our desire in establishing the Festival has been to bring a world-class literary event to the Sonoma wine country and celebrate learning and the art of thoughtful discussion in this beautiful setting.

Additionally, we want to share the Festival's programming with as much of our community as possible. To this end, we produce two community-focused events during the Festival. Students Day is a full day event on Friday, when we bring thought leaders to share their ideas with Sonoma Valley students and encourage them to explore new concepts, and find avenues for personal growth and pursuing their dreams. Students Day at the elementary schools takes place in the days leading up to the Festival and includes author presentations, and in 2026, the distribution of 2,000 free books to local students. Authors on the Plaza, held Saturday at the historic Sonoma Plaza, is a family-friendly free community event.

We are pleased to report that since our inception in 2018, almost 200 authors and thought leaders have presented to over 2,750 attendees. At Students Day, our speakers have touched 14,500 students, and almost 20,000 books written by the presenting authors have been given free to students. Authors on the Sonoma Plaza, our free event for the Sonoma Community, enjoyed 1,000 attendees in 2025. All this has been made possible thanks to the generosity of our sponsors.

Be sure to visit the Festival Bookstore on the patio outside the Sonoma Valley Room to purchase books and have them signed by the authors.

Welcome to the Festival!
Ginny and David Freeman
Co-Founders, Sonoma Valley Authors Festival

THE FESTIVAL EXPERIENCE

WELCOME

The Sonoma Valley Authors Festival team and our wonderful volunteers are here to make your Festival experience enjoyable and memorable. If you have any questions, we're here to help! Below are some basic guidelines to ensure a good time is had by all.

HEALTH MEASURES

The safety of our attendees, speakers, staff, and volunteers is of utmost importance. We ask that you comply with any health mandates during the Festival and refrain from attending sessions if you have any flu or COVID-like symptoms. Guests may elect to wear masks if they feel more comfortable doing so. The buildings are well-ventilated, and the sessions are scheduled to allow attendees frequent opportunities to change their surroundings.

NAME BADGES

Access to all Festival venues is limited to those wearing name badges. Please wear your badge at all times.

INFORMATION

If you have questions, please visit the information desk located on the Breezeway Lawn. Also, look for one of our volunteers. They will be happy to help.

SEATING

We encourage Festival attendees to take their seats at least 5 minutes before the start of each presentation. Please note, reserved seating for specific passholders is marked on the chair band, where applicable.

LATE SEATING

We sympathize with latecomers, but for the sake of the speakers and other guests, we will not be able to seat you once a presentation has begun. Latecomers will be asked to stand in the back if there is room.

ACCESSIBILITY

Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn and Spa can accommodate guests with mobility issues. Ask the Front Desk for assistance inside the hotel. There is also a SVAF golf cart located all day in the entrance roundabout. Ask for help moving between sessions, if needed.

THE FESTIVAL EXPERIENCE

PHOTOGRAPHY, AUDIO & VIDEO RECORDING

Use of audio and visual recording devices of any kind (including smartphones) is strictly prohibited during the presentations. Part of the joy of coming to the Festival is disconnecting from the outside world and fully engaging in the presentations. Please turn off rather than silence all cell phones, smartphones and other digital devices during presentations. In addition to being a distraction, interference from these devices can cause problems with our wireless microphones and production equipment. Guests answering their phones or texting during the presentations will be asked to step outside.

Attendees are welcome to take photos and videos outside of the session rooms. Share @svauthorsfest on Instagram and Facebook.

Professional photographers and a digital marketing/content team will be taking photos and videos for marketing purposes. The Sonoma Valley Authors Festival reserves the right to use any photograph/video taken at the festival, without the expressed written permission of those included within the photograph/video. SVAF may use the photograph/video in publications or other media material produced, used or contracted by SVAF including but not limited to: websites, social media, newspapers, magazines, television, etc.

FESTIVAL LOCATIONS AND ATTIRE

All Festival presentations and breakout sessions will take place indoors. Please refer to the map on the inside back cover of this guide, or on the back of your name badge. Breakfast and lunch will be served on the lawn across from the Pavilion. Attire for all events is business casual. We encourage you to dress in layers, including a sweater or light jacket, to ensure your comfort in air conditioned and/or heated meeting rooms.

FOOD AND BEVERAGES

During the Festival, attendees are invited to enjoy breakfast and lunch on two days, as well as complimentary coffee, iced tea, lemonade, water, fresh fruit and snacks during the day.

THE FESTIVAL EXPERIENCE CONTINUED

LOST & FOUND

Lost items will be delivered to the hotel's Front Desk who will give them to the hotel's security team for safekeeping. Please inquire at the Front Desk for any missing items.

SVAF IS ECO-FRIENDLY

- The Festival ChicoBag you received at check-in is machine washable and can be reused, eliminating plastic or paper bags going into landfill
- Lanyards will be collected when the Festival is over and used again next year
- Rather than separate notepads, there are several blank pages in the back of this program for notes
- Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn and Spa has comfortable chairs that are either upholstered or have pads, so no need for individual cushions

AUTHORS FESTIVAL BOOKSTORE

FESTIVAL BOOKSTORE

Readers' Books will have a selection of books by Festival authors available for purchase on the patio outside the Sonoma Valley Room. A limited number of titles will be pre-signed if you wish to avoid waiting in line for a signature.

AUTHOR BOOK SIGNING

If you wish to have an author sign a book purchased at the Festival, times are listed in your program schedule. Author Book Signings will be located on the patio outside the bookstore. Be sure to check the schedule to ensure you don't miss the opportunity to have your book signed!

GIFT WRAPPING & SHIPPING

Readers' Books will have a ship and wrap desk on the patio outside the Sonoma Valley Room. Books purchased at the Festival may be shipped to the destination(s) of your choice and complimentary gift wrapping will be available.

TOP 10 REASONS TO BUY BOOKS AT THE FESTIVAL BOOKSTORE

- Readers' Books is as local as you can get. Shop local!
- Readers' Books has a great selection of titles
- Autographed books have more perceived value and often more real value over time
- When a book is signed by the author, you feel a special connection while you are reading it
- Books make great gifts - especially when personalized for the recipient
- Readers' Books will wrap and ship your purchases anywhere for you
- Authors expect attendees to purchase their books when they take time to come to the Festival
- You're supporting independent booksellers
- You can check your book-laden bag with Readers' Books while you attend festival sessions
- Books never need to be recharged... they recharge you

AUTHOR BOOK SIGNING SCHEDULE | **MAY 1**

FRIDAY
5:00 — 5:30

BILLY COLLINS
COLUM MCCANN
MARIA SEMPLE
MEENA AHAMED
BRYAN BURROUGH
RICK ATKINSON

AUTHOR BOOK SIGNING SCHEDULE | **MAY 2**

SATURDAY
12:30 — 1:00

TODD PURDUM
ABBAS MILANI
JAMES WANG
SONIA PURNELL
DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN

SATURDAY
5:15 — 5:45

ADMIRAL JAMES STAVRIDIS
LIAQUAT AHAMED
STEPHEN KOTKIN
ANDREW ROSS SORKIN
DAVE BARRY

AUTHOR BOOK SIGNING SCHEDULE | **MAY 3**

SUNDAY
10:45 — 11:15

LAUREN COYLE ROSEN
BARBARA DADDINO
JEFFREY ROSEN

SUNDAY
1:00 — 1:30

ALEX FILIPPENKO
LIZA GERSHMAN
SONIA PURNELL

LOCATION

All author book signings take place on the patio outside the Sonoma Valley Room, adjacent to the bookstore. Please note: any changes to this schedule will be announced in the Pavilion.

WELCOME TO SONOMA VALLEY



Sonoma Valley, about an hour's drive north of San Francisco, delights visitors and residents alike with its stunning beauty, rich history, acclaimed food and wine, and numerous outdoor activities. Boasting over 13,000 acres of state and regional parks for hiking, biking and picnicking, and over 400 wineries as well as a new 2-star Michelin restaurant, Sonoma Valley welcomes you to discover its many attributes

Explore Sonoma's rich past and Old West culture around the historic tree-filled Sonoma Plaza. Founded in 1835 when California was still a part of Mexico, the town's heritage is still evident today. An 18th century Spanish mission stands across the street, open for visitors to relive its past.

A block away, the Sonoma Valley Art Museum exhibits renowned works by regional, national and international modern and contemporary artists. The Plaza is a historic landmark, a unique gem radiating a sense of tranquility around every corner, restaurant and shop. This is where small-town authenticity, old-world charm and cosmopolitan sophistication truly come together. The beauty of Sonoma can be seen just about everywhere, from the leafy country roads to the more than 60 regional and state parks that invite visitors to hike through redwood forests, paddle rivers and bask in the surrounding nature.

Once home to the legendary author, Jack London Historic State Park features the remains of Jack London's "Wolf House," as well as the small cottage where he wrote many of his most famous novels, a museum built by his widow and filled with artifacts from their adventure travel around the world, and his gravesite.

Welcome to our special corner of California, recently named by *U.S. News* as one of the best small towns to visit in America, and the perfect setting for the Sonoma Valley Authors Festival.

GROUCHO MARX

Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside of a dog it's too dark to read".

C.S. LEWIS

"You can never get a cup of tea large enough or a book long enough to suit me."

MARK TWAIN

"'Classic' – a book which people praise and don't read."

FRIDAY

AUTHORS FESTIVAL

SONOMA VALLEY ROOM PATIO
9:30– 5:30

FESTIVAL BOOKSTORE OPENS

Our friends at Readers' Books are the official booksellers for SVAF - featuring titles by Festival authors. Shop early for the best selection and have your book signed by the author! Readers' Books will be happy to store your purchases while you attend Festival sessions.

BREEZEWAY LAWN
10:00 - 6:00

FESTIVAL REGISTRATION OPENS

Please stop by the Festival registration tables located on the Breezeway Lawn to check-in and receive your name badge and detailed Festival program.

Please enjoy the *Financial Times*, *HTSI* and other magazines, compliments of our media partners, on tables near the registration table on the Breezeway Lawn.

BREEZEWAY LAWN
12:00 - 1:00

LUNCH

Start your Festival experience with a delicious lunch on the lawn, compliments of the Festival. Meet old friends and make new ones as you enjoy fresh Sonoma Valley cuisine and take a peek at the books you just picked up at the Festival bookstore.

PAVILION
1:15 — 1:30

FESTIVAL KICK-OFF

Opening remarks and welcome from Sonoma Valley Authors Festival Founders Ginny and David Freeman.

FRIDAY

Session topics as of April 2.

KEYNOTE SESSION ONE

PAVILION
1:30 — 2:15

BILLY COLLINS

Dog Show

Billy Collins makes poetry feel like a joyful, shared conversation—funny, insightful, and refreshingly human. In his new witty and heartfelt collection, *The New York Times* bestselling author and former U.S. Poet Laureate captures the essence and mystery of dogs, turning his inimitable eye and ear to the complexities of dog behavior, while pondering the profound companionship that dogs bring to our lives and what we learn from them about ourselves. Collins has been called "America's favorite poet," and his impact on contemporary American poetry cannot be understated.

KEYNOTE SESSION TWO

PAVILION
2:15 — 3:00

COLUM MCCANN

Twist

Colum McCann's electrifying new novel is a plunge into the unseen depths — both literal and emotional. With cinematic intensity and immersive prose, he brings the underwater world of free diving to vivid life. Beneath the surface, undersea cables serve as a powerful metaphor for the invisible threads that bind us — technologically, emotionally, and globally. As an Irish literary icon and National Book Award–winning storyteller, McCann has created some of the defining works of contemporary fiction. His storytelling is expansive yet intimate—crossing continents, cultures, and histories — illuminating the lives of those too often unheard and the moments that quietly (and sometimes explosively) shape our world.

3:00 — 3:15 **BREAK**

FRIDAY

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

PAVILION
3:15 — 4:00

MARIA SEMPLE

IN CONVERSATION WITH JEFFREY BROWN

Go Gentle

Witty, sharp, and full of emotional insight, Maria Semple has a knack for turning the messiness of modern life—family chaos, creative burnout, midlife reinvention—into something both hilarious and deeply human. Her sharp wit and insight have made her a standout voice in contemporary fiction. Fans of her earlier books will enjoy the insider peek at her creative evolution—from Hollywood screenwriter to literary satirist to reflective novelist—while new readers get an engaging, self-deprecating storyteller whose mix of heart and hilarity makes even serious themes sparkle.

For over 30 years, esteemed PBS NewsHour anchor Jeffrey Brown has interviewed writers, poets, and musicians.

SONOMA VALLEY ROOM
3:15 — 4:00

MEENA AHAMED

IN CONVERSATION WITH LIAQUAT AHAMED

Indian Genius: The Meteoric Rise of Indians in America

What propelled Indian immigrants from $8-in-their-pocket beginnings to the commanding heights of technology, medicine, business, and public policy—in a single generation? In her much-heralded new book, journalist and historian Meena Ahamed chronicles one of the most remarkable success stories of modern America. At a moment when immigration, meritocracy, and diversity ignite fierce debate across the nation, Ahamed delivers something rare: clarity. Her work cuts through slogans and stereotypes, offering a rich, deeply human narrative that challenges both triumphalism and nativism. The result is a perspective that is at once balanced and urgently relevant.

Liaquat Ahamed is an esteemed investment manager and Pulitzer Prize–winning historian.

FRIDAY

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

KENWOOD ROOM
3:15 — 4:00

BRYAN BURROUGH

The Gunfighters: How Texas Made the West Wild

Gunfights at high noon, outlaws turned folk heroes, and a frontier steeped in legend—how much of it was real, and how much was pure invention? Bryan Burrough uncovers the truth behind the mythmaking that defined America's Old West, revealing how Texas shaped its lawlessness and iconic figures. *The New York Times* praised it as "one hell of a good read" and "one of the most important books on the American West in many years." Blending mythology, true crime, and cultural history, Burrough shows how the legends of the frontier forged a national identity built as much on imagination as on fact—and how every myth reveals the hopes and fears of the people who tell it.

4:00 — 4:15 **BREAK**

KEYNOTE SESSION THREE

PAVILION
4:15 — 5:00

RICK ATKINSON

The Fate of the Day: The War for America: Fort Ticonderoga to Charleston, 1777-1780

Many people think they know the American Revolution well, but Rick Atkinson challenges common myths. He avoids the extremes of hero-worship and cynicism, offering balanced portraits of the founders and a nuanced account of how close the cause of independence often came to failure. This kind of revision — grounded in evidence and empathy — may reshape how you understand the nation's origins. Atkinson is a three-time Pulitzer Prize winner whose books bring to life not just famous figures like George Washington and Benedict Arnold, but also the experiences of ordinary soldiers, civilians, and even the British side of the war. Atkinson's talks go beyond military history to explore broader themes—what leadership looks like in chaos, how fragile nations improvise their survival, and what the Revolution can still teach democratic societies today.

This session is presented by the Financial Times.

FRIDAY

PAVILION
5:00

CLOSING REMARKS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

SONOMA VALLEY ROOM PATIO
5:00 — 5:30

AUTHOR BOOK SIGNING

Just across from the Pavilion, you will find the Festival Bookstore on the Sonoma Valley Room patio, where you can shop for books and meet the authors as they sign your (purchased) books. Authors who will be signing books will be announced during the Closing Remarks.

PAVILION
7:15 - 9:00

SPONSORS DINNER

Sponsors are invited to a private dinner onsite in the Pavilion starting at 7:15 pm. A reception-style dinner and a hosted bar will highlight the best of Sonoma Valley's food and wine. Other than tables reserved for major donors, seating is open. Guests are invited to arrive and depart as they wish, and mix and mingle at their own pace. Famed SF magician Jay Alexander will perform tableside. We look forward to celebrating with all the authors, speakers, and sponsors!

The Financial Times is the featured sponsor of the Friday night dinner in the Pavilion.

Freeman Vineyard & Winery is the featured winery of the Friday night dinner in the Pavilion.

BREEZEWAY LAWN
9:15 — 10:00

POETRY BY THE FIREPIT WITH BILLY COLLINS AND JEFFREY BROWN

Join former U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins and PBS's Jeffrey Brown for an intimate evening of poetry by firelight—where warmth, wit, and language meet under the stars. Experience the rare magic of hearing poets bring their own words to life, sharing both humor and heart in verse that feels personal, timeless, and alive. Collins's signature blend of insight and irony, paired with Brown's thoughtful storytelling voice, promises an unforgettable gathering—part reading, part conversation, all soul. Settle in by the fire for a night that lingers long after the last line is read.

SATURDAY

GOOD MORNING

BREEZEWAY LAWN
7:30 – 8:45

BREAKFAST

Start the day with a complimentary continental breakfast on the Breezeway Lawn.

VINEYARD ROOM
7:30 – 6:00

FESTIVAL REGISTRATION AND INFORMATION

Please stop by the Festival information desk with any questions. It is in the Vineyard Room next to the hotel's Front Desk.

SONOMA VALLEY ROOM PATIO
7:30– 5:30

FESTIVAL BOOKSTORE

Visit the bookstore to find books by Festival authors. Shop early for the best selections and have your book signed by the author. Our book-selling partner, Readers' Books, will gladly store your purchases while you attend Festival sessions or ship your books home for you.

SATURDAY

Session topics as of April 2.

EARLY BIRD BREAKOUT SESSIONS

PAVILION
8:00 — 8:45

ABBAS MILANI

"Iran Beyond The Headlines"

Abbas Milani invites audiences to look beyond headlines and into the untold stories that have shaped modern Iran. He explores the complex history and politics of the nation, examining how leadership, reform efforts, and political pressures led to the Iranian Revolution. Highlighting the tension between tradition and modernity, Milani reveals how intellectuals, artists, and political movements have influenced national identity over time. Unpacking decades of misunderstanding and missed opportunities, he challenges stereotypes and offers a nuanced perspective, encouraging audiences to think critically about how history, culture, and politics shape a nation's future.

SONOMA VALLEY ROOM
8:00 — 8:45

TODD S. PURDUM

Desi Arnaz: The Man Who Invented Television

Though most people remember Desi Arnaz as Ricky Ricardo from *I Love Lucy*, Todd Purdum argues that Arnaz was also one of the true architects of modern television—a creative genius, technical innovator, and business pioneer who helped transform how the world makes and consumes TV. Drawing on new archival research, interviews, and behind-the-scenes documents, Purdum reveals how Desi Arnaz—an immigrant bandleader who escaped Cuba and rose against Hollywood's barriers — created the modern TV system and reshaped American culture.

SATURDAY

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

KENWOOD ROOM
8:00 — 8:45

JAMES WANG

What You Need to Know About AI: A Primer on Being Human in an Artificially Intelligent World

Everyone is talking about AI, but very few people have a clear framework for thinking about it. James Wang brings together history, technology, economics, and lived experience to explain how AI works, why it matters, and where the conversation so often goes wrong. Wang is a venture capitalist and technologist at the forefront of the deep-tech revolution, leading investments in artificial intelligence, synthetic biology, and advanced materials — technologies redefining how humanity works, heals, and creates. He cuts through the noise — doomsday warnings, breathless hype, and promises of salvation — to provide an accessible, grounded introduction for anyone who wants to move beyond the headlines.

PAVILION
9:00 — 9:15

DAY TWO OPENING REMARKS

KEYNOTE SESSION FOUR

PAVILION
9:15 — 10:00

DAVE BARRY

Class Clown: The Memoirs of a Professional Wiseass

Dave Barry's witty, irreverent take on life's absurdities—and his knack for finding comedy in the trivial and the serious—have made him a beloved figure in American culture. His enduring appeal lies in his fearless, zany exploration of human foibles, powered by razor-sharp wit and boundless energy. His new memoir is earning enthusiastic praise for its humor and heart. *The New York Times* calls it a "home run" for humorous literature, applauding Barry's ability to keep his wonderfully juvenile style while adding new depth and poignancy. Don't miss his triumphant return to the SVAF stage—it's sure to be a master class in comedy!

SATURDAY

KEYNOTE SESSION FIVE

PAVILION
10:00 — 10:45

JOHN HONCHARIW

"What Your Dog Is Trying To Tell You"

Breakthroughs in AI and Computer Vision are transforming how we understand and care for our dogs. Drawing on his work with Companion—a company using AI to detect early signs of pain, stress, or health problems—he'll show how technology can "listen" to dogs in ways humans can't, recognizing subtle shifts in movement and behavior long before illness is visible. Rather than replacing veterinarians or pet owners, these innovations strengthen the bond between them, giving dogs a voice and their humans new insight. It's a hopeful vision of technology deepening empathy—and improving lives—on both ends of the leash.

10:45 — 11:00

BREAK

KEYNOTE SESSION SIX

PAVILION
11:00 — 11:45

SONIA PURNELL

Kingmaker: Pamela Harriman's Astonishing Life of Power, Seduction, and Intrigue

Bestselling British journalist-turned-historian Sonia Purnell rescues remarkable women from history's footnotes and puts them center stage. Her latest work, *Kingmaker*—hailed as a Book of the Year by 15 outlets — is an electrifying re-examination of one of the 20th century's greatest unsung power players, a tale of sex, money, politics, and dazzling style. Harriman's true legacy, long overshadowed by her notorious affairs and her secret influence on world events, is finally revealed.

SATURDAY

KEYNOTE SESSION SEVEN

PAVILION
11:45 — 12:30

DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN

IN CONVERSATION WITH JAMES STROCK

"Leadership in Turbulent Times: Hope from History's Hardships"

Pulitzer Prize–winning historian and legendary presidential biographer Doris Kearns Goodwin returns to the SVAF stage for an inspiring conversation about how America endures and prevails. Time and again, the nation has faced crisis and division—only to emerge stronger, guided by resilience and a renewed sense of common purpose. Drawing on the lessons of history and the leaders who met their moments with courage and hope, Kearns Goodwin reminds us that we've been here before.

Bestselling author James Strock writes *The Next Nationalism* on Substack and hosts the *Serve to Lead* podcast.

SONOMA VALLEY ROOM PATIO
12:30 — 1:00

AUTHOR BOOK SIGNING

The Festival Bookstore is on the patio outside the Sonoma Valley Room, just across the driveway from the Pavilion. You can meet authors there as they sign your purchased book(s). Authors who will be signing books will be announced during Opening Remarks.

BREEZEWAY LAWN
12:30 — 1:45

LUNCH

Enjoy lunch on the lawn and the company of your fellow Festival attendees.

SATURDAY

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

PAVILION
1:45 — 2:30

ADMIRAL JAMES STAVRIDIS

2084: A Novel of Future War

Distinguished retired four-star U.S. Navy officer Admiral James Stavridis draws on his own deep well of strategic experience to imagine the dangers and possibilities of tomorrow's world in his fiction, offering a compelling vision of global geopolitics and security challenges in the late 21st century. Admiral Stavridis returns to Sonoma with a brilliantly woven cautionary tale and chilling prophecy about the possible path to war for a planet devastated by climate change. 2084 emphasizes the power of imaginative thinking to write a different destiny for humanity in the face of environmental and political upheaval.

SONOMA VALLEY ROOM
1:45 — 2:30

LIAQUAT AHAMED

1873: The Rothschilds, the First Great Depression, and the Making of the Modern World

Kenyan-born and educated at Cambridge and Harvard, Liaquat Ahamed is a financial historian and former global investment chief who makes the machinery of money feel human. He brings central bankers down from marble pedestals and reveals the personalities, pride, and power plays that move markets and remake nations. His new book to be released, June 2, revisits the first truly global financial crisis through the pioneering European banking dynasty at its center. He will bring to the Sonoma stage a fresh perspective about how that 19th-century bust mirrors our own era of high debt, speculative surges, and shifting great-power balances.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS CONTINUED

KENWOOD ROOM
1:45 — 2:30

MICHELLE KAUFMAN

"The Human Stories Behind Global Sports"

Why are athletes such symbols of national pride? Why do women's sports still fight for visibility, and how do global media narratives evolve in real time? Acclaimed *Miami Herald* sports reporter Michelle Kaufman, who has interviewed icons like Lionel Messi, connects the emotional pulse of sports with deeper social questions. She's covered the rise of international women's soccer, the shifting landscape of college athletics, and the human stories behind the headlines—with the clarity and empathy that define her work. For anyone drawn to storytelling, journalism, or the human side of sport, hearing Kaufman speak is a masterclass in curiosity, resilience, and great reporting.

2:30 — 2:45 **BREAK**

KEYNOTE SESSION EIGHT

PAVILION
2:45 — 3:30

ADMIRAL JAMES STAVRIDIS

IN CONVERSATION WITH JAMES STROCK

"Navigating Chaos: Leadership in an Age of Global Uncertainty"

Are we entering a new Cold War or a more chaotic global order? Admiral James Stavridis examines today's shifting security landscape amid uncertainty and change. With NATO facing mounting challenges, including questions about U.S. leadership and European autonomy, Admiral Stavridis, explores the implications of a potential post-American alliance system. He will also assess the wars in Ukraine and Iran, and how emerging technologies like AI, drones, and cyber threats are reshaping global stability.

Bestselling author James Strock writes *The Next Nationalism* on Substack and hosts the *Serve to Lead* podcast.

3:30 — 3:45 **BREAK**

KEYNOTE SESSION NINE

PAVILION
3:45 — 4:30

STEPHEN KOTKIN

"America at 250: Possible Futures of the U.S. in the World"

When, how, and why did the leadership of the United States decide to build and sustain a world order? What has happened since? What has *not* happened? Why has there been so much instability and volatility recently? Where could this go? What might the U.S. position in the world, and the world as a whole, look like a decade from now? How can the study of history help us understand the present and our possible futures? Stephen Kotkin joined the Hoover Institution and Stanford University in 2022, after teaching at Princeton for 33 years, mentoring a new generation of historians, and his research and writing have completely reshaped our understanding of the Soviet Union, and more broadly, of 20th-century history.

KEYNOTE SESSION TEN

PAVILION
4:30 — 5:15

ANDREW ROSS SORKIN

IN CONVERSATION WITH JEFFREY BROWN

1929: Inside the Greatest Crash in Wall Street History—and How It Shattered a Nation

With unparalleled access to historical records and newly uncovered documents, Andrew Ross Sorkin takes us inside the chaos of the crash, behind the scenes of a raging battle between Wall Street and Washington, and the larger-than-life characters whose ambition and naivete in an endless boom led to disaster. The dizzying highs and brutal lows of this era eerily mirror today's world—where markets soar, political tensions mount, and the fight over financial influence plays out once again.

For over 30 years, esteemed PBS NewsHour anchor Jeffrey Brown has interviewed writers, poets, and musicians.

SATURDAY

PAVILION
5:15

CLOSING REMARKS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SONOMA VALLEY ROOM PATIO
5:15 — 5:45

AUTHOR BOOK SIGNING

Just a few steps from the Pavilion, the Festival Bookstore is on the patio outside the Sonoma Valley Room. You can meet authors there as they sign your purchased book(s). Authors who will be signing books will be announced during Opening Remarks.

BREEZEWAY LAWN
9:30 — 10:30

STARGAZING WITH ASTROPHYSICIST ALEX FILIPPENKO, Ph.D.

Join famed astrophysicist and astronomer Alex Filippenko for an extraordinary night under the stars. Using his powerful, high-resolution telescope—projected in real time onto a large flat-screen display—you'll see star clusters, the craters of the Moon, and glowing nebulae with stunning clarity. As the cosmos unfolds above you, Dr. Filippenko's lively narration blends humor, storytelling, and cutting-edge science, showing exactly why he's been voted "Best Professor" at UC Berkeley nine times. Bring your curiosity to the Breezeway lawn across from the Pavilion for a stargazing experience that expands your sense of the universe—and your place within it.

SUNDAY

GOOD MORNING

BREEZEWAY LAWN
7:30 — 8:45

BREAKFAST

Start the day with a complimentary continental breakfast on the Breezeway Lawn.

VINEYARD ROOM
7:30 — 1:00

FESTIVAL REGISTRATION AND INFORMATION

If you have any questions, stop by the Festival information desk. It is located in the Vineyard Room next to the hotel's Front Desk.

SONOMA VALLEY ROOM PATIO
7:30 — 1:30

FESTIVAL BOOKSTORE

Visit the bookstore to find a rich selection of books by Festival authors. Shop early for the best selections and have your book signed by the author. Our book-selling partner, Readers' Books, will gladly store your purchases while you attend Festival sessions or ship your books home for you.

EARLY BIRD BREAKOUT SESSIONS

PAVILION
8:00 — 8:45

LAUREN COYLE ROSEN

Goddess: A History

So many of the world's most iconic goddesses have been banned, sidelined, or forgotten. How did this happen? What does it reveal about the human condition—and how could remembering their power offer new archetypes for women and men? Drawing from her forthcoming book, Coyle Rosen explores the cultural worlds of these deities to uncover a lost past when feminine figures reigned alongside masculine ones as divine equals. For anyone interested in religion, feminism, or decolonial thought, her sweeping global history shows how the erasure of goddesses from patriarchal religions shaped society while celebrating the enduring power of the divine feminine at the roots of government, commerce, and philosophy.

SONOMA VALLEY ROOM
8:00 — 8:45

BARBARA DADDINO

Tesla's Cottage: The Lost History of Nikola Tesla at Wardenclyffe

When Barbara Daddino and her partner discovered that their Long Island home once belonged to inventor Nikola Tesla, it sparked a decade-long search to uncover the truth of his time there. Through historical records, letters, and local archives, she reconstructed Tesla's life in Shoreham, where he pursued his visionary Wardenclyffe Tower project. The result is part memoir, part historical detective story, and part tribute to perseverance. Praised for its emotional depth and authenticity, the book reveals "the man behind the genius," a Tesla filled with emotion, ambition, and struggle. Daddino's work blends literary craftsmanship with historical curiosity, merging personal narrative and investigative biography.

PAVILION
9:00 — 9:15

DAY THREE OPENING REMARKS

KEYNOTE SESSION ELEVEN

PAVILION
9:15 — 10:00

JEFFREY ROSEN

The Pursuit of Liberty: How Hamilton vs. Jefferson Ignited the Lasting Battle Over Power in America

In a time when the foundational ideals of America are more contested than ever, Jeffrey Rosen emerges as a guiding light among the nation's legal thinkers. In his latest book, he explores the clashing visions of Hamilton and Jefferson about how to balance liberty and power in a debate that continues to define—and divide—our country: Jefferson championed states' rights and individual liberties, while Hamilton pushed for a strong Federal government and a powerful executive. Critics have hailed it as his most important contribution yet — a book that arrives precisely when the nation needs constitutional clarity most.

KEYNOTE SESSION TWELVE

PAVILION
10:00 — 10:45

KATIE POLLARD

"The Logic of Life: AI, Genome Editing, and the Search for Cause and Effect"

Dr. Katie Pollard is tackling one of biology's hardest problems. Many assume that sequencing a genome "solves" it — but Pollard's work shows how far we still are from that goal. Of the millions of genetic variants each of us carries, only a few cause disease, and until recently, there was no efficient way to tell which ones matter. Her lab builds AI tools that sift through that haystack and predict the needles before anyone touches a pipette. That loop—AI prediction → genome editing → validation—could compress years of trial and error into days. For anyone interested in the intersection of genomics, AI, and medicine, Pollard is defining the field's future.

SONOMA VALLEY ROOM PATIO
10:45 — 11:15

AUTHOR BOOK SIGNING

Just a few steps from the Pavilion, the Festival Bookstore is on the patio outside the Sonoma Valley Room. You can meet authors there as they sign your purchased book(s). Authors who will be signing books will be announced during Opening Remarks.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

PAVILION
11:15 — 12:00

ALEX FILIPPENKO

"Conquering the North Pole Marathon"

Award-winning UC Berkeley astrophysicist Alex Filippenko returns to Sonoma with an extraordinary story to tell. Fresh from his remarkable journey to the geographic North Pole, where he conquered the North Pole Marathon — 26.2 miles across the frozen Arctic Ocean — Filippenko will take audiences on a visual and emotional expedition through one of Earth's most extreme environments. With breathtaking photographs and vivid accounts, he'll share moments beneath the midnight sun, reveal dazzling atmospheric phenomena, and describe encounters with awe-inspiring Arctic wildlife — from polar bears to blue whales — set against a backdrop of ice, sea, and sky.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS (CONTINUED)

SONOMA VALLEY ROOM
11:15 — 12:00

SOYOUNG LEE

"New Voices, New Visions: Leading Museums into the Future"

After seven years as Chief Curator at the Harvard Art Museums and the previous 15 years as the first curator of Korean art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, all eyes are on Soyoung Lee, newly appointed CEO of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. A distinguished art historian and curator, Lee has emerged as a remarkable leader dedicated to making museums places of connection that honor both tradition and innovation. She has a clear, forward-looking philosophy about what museums should be in the 21st century, asking us to consider how creativity, identity, and history shape one another—and how museums can actively join that evolving conversation. Under her leadership, the Asian Art Museum is becoming a hub for tradition and innovation — celebrating heritage while championing new voices and digital engagement.

KENWOOD ROOM
11:15 — 12:00

LIZA GERSHMAN

Farm + Market: Healdsburg

Behind Sonoma County's world-class cuisine lies a network of farmers, chefs, and communities working in quiet harmony. Liza Gershman's new book captures this dynamic world — not through recipes alone, but through the stories of the organic growers who define the region's flavor and character. She offers a vivid look at how their collaboration with chefs fuels creativity, sustains economies, and keeps local food culture alive, revealing why regional identity still matters in a global age and how farmers' markets anchor that connection.

12:00 — 12:15 **BREAK**

KEYNOTE SESSION THIRTEEN

PAVILION
12:15 — 1:00

SONIA PURNELL

A Woman of No Importance

Virginia Hall isn't a fictional hero; she's a real woman who outwitted the Gestapo, built resistance networks, and carried out dangerous missions across occupied France during World War II. And she did all this with a prosthetic leg, constantly on the run, improvising disguises and escape plans. Code named *Bookworm*, Virginia Hall worked for the U.K.'s clandestine Special Overseas Executive (SOE) and the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in France during WWII. She joined the CIA for the final 15 years of her career, but remained active for decades after her retirement, although her achievements were classified or overshadowed. Her story flips expectations: the most effective spy in the room was often the one no one took seriously.

PAVILION
1:00

FESTIVAL CLOSING REMARKS

Closing remarks from Sonoma Valley Authors Festival founders Ginny and David Freeman.

SONOMA VALLEY ROOM PATIO
1:00 — 1:30

AUTHOR BOOK SIGNING

Just a few steps from the Pavilion, the Festival Bookstore is on the patio outside the Sonoma Valley Room. You can meet authors there as they sign your purchased book(s). Authors who will be signing books will be announced during Opening Remarks.

AUTHOR & SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

GEORGE R.R. MARTIN

"A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies, said Jojen. The man who never reads lives only one."

RENE DESCARTES

"The reading of all good books is like a conversation with the finest minds of past centuries."

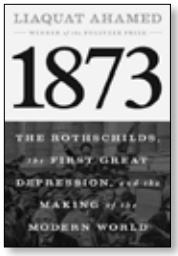
WALT DISNEY

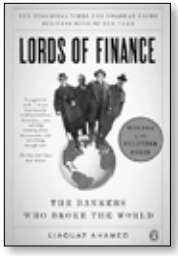
"There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate's loot on Treasure Island."



LIAQUAT AHAMED

Liaquat Ahamed spent more than two decades leading the World Bank's institutional investment division and later the BNP Paribas subsidiary Fischer Francis Trees & Watts. He is also a Pulitzer Prize–winning historian known for revealing how the personalities and beliefs of central bankers shape the course of global economic history.





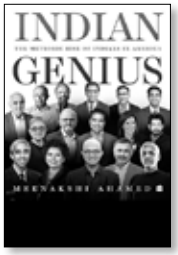
Ahamed is best known for his landmark study of central bankers and the Great Depression, *Lords of Finance: The Bankers Who Broke the World*. In addition to winning the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for History, his first book won the *Financial Times*–Goldman Sachs Business Book of the Year Award and the Council on Foreign Relations' Arthur Ross Gold Medal. Ahamed later published *Money and Tough Love: On Tour with the IMF*, a shorter work that illuminates the culture, constraints, and political dilemmas of the International Monetary Fund. Ahamed's new book, *1873: The Rothschilds, the First Great Depression and the Making of the Modern World*, revisits the first truly global financial crisis through the lens of the pioneering European banking dynasty at its center.

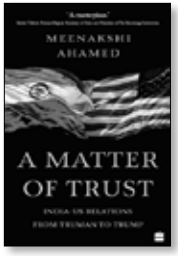
Ahamed holds degrees in economics from Cambridge University and Harvard. He has served on the board of trustees of the Brookings Institution, chairs the Sun Valley Writers' Conference, and has been involved with the New America Foundation. He was also one of the producers of the 2006 Iraq War film, *The Situation*.

He is a frequent contributor to *The New York Times*, the *Financial Times*, and *Foreign Affairs*.



TONY POWELL





MEENAKSHI (MEENA) AHAMED

Meenakshi Ahamed is a journalist and author whose work bridges South Asia and the United States, offering a deeply informed perspective on diplomacy, migration, and the forces reshaping global politics. She is the author of *Indian Genius: The Meteoric Rise of Indians in America*, which explores how Indian Americans have become leaders in technology, medicine, business, and public life, as well as the social and cultural factors behind their striking success. Her earlier book, *A Matter of Trust: U.S.–India Relations from Truman to Trump*, is a detailed narrative history of the complex and evolving partnership between the world's largest and oldest democracies.

Ahamed began her career at the World Bank and later served as the London correspondent for New Delhi Television (NDTV) from 1989 to 1996. Her work has since appeared in publications including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Atlantic*, *Foreign Policy*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Asian Age*.

In addition to her writing, Ahamed has long been active in global health and humanitarian work. She has served on the boards of Doctors Without Borders, Drugs for Neglected Diseases, the Turquoise Mountain Foundation, and the Vellore Christian Medical College Foundation.

Born in Calcutta, India, Ahamed earned her master's degree in development economics and public health from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS).



SAN FRANCISCO MAGIC THEATER
at the Marrakech

JAY ALEXANDER

Jay Alexander is one of America's most captivating magicians and mentalists, celebrated for blending mind reading, sleight of hand, and sharp-witted comedy into thrilling live experiences. With a career spanning over two decades, he has amazed audiences across the globe—from Fortune 500 executives to Hollywood celebrities—earning acclaim as both a master illusionist and an expert in the psychology of perception.

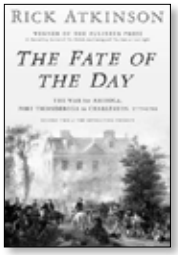
Based in San Francisco, Alexander is the creator and star of *Mind Tricks Live!*, the award-winning show performed at his venue, *The Marrakech Magic Theater*. The intimate setting enhances his signature style: interactive, fast-paced, and full of hilarious, mind-bending surprises that leave audiences questioning what's real. The show is the #1 rated show in San Francisco of any kind on Yelp and TripAdvisor.

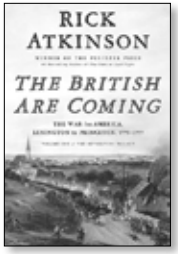
Alexander is one of the country's top corporate and society entertainers. His most notable appearances include the Today Show, TEDx Talks, MTV, Good Morning America, and many other morning shows.

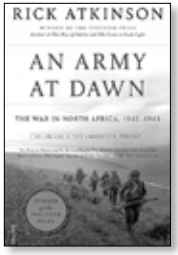
He is the great-grandson of the legendary vaudeville performer, Gentleman Ben Darwin. At the age of 14, Jay Alexander was honored to be the youngest recipient of the Society of American Magicians Gold Medal of Honor. Today, he is renowned for blending mind-reading, sleight of hand, and spontaneous humor into unforgettable live experiences.



ELLIOTT O'DONOVAN







RICK ATKINSON

Rick Atkinson is the author of eight seminal narrative histories about five American wars, and *The New York Times Book Review* declared, "There is no better writer of narrative history than the Pulitzer Prize-winning Atkinson."

Atkinson is best known for his *Liberation Trilogy*, the definitive account of America's role in the liberation of Europe during World War II. His sweeping *Revolution Trilogy*—written in conjunction with his contributions to Ken Burns's multi-part series on the American Revolutionary War—offers a masterful retelling of America's fight for independence. Together, these works illuminate some of the most consequential moments in the nation's past with unparalleled clarity and humanity.

His most recent book, *The Fate of the Day: The War for America, Fort Ticonderoga to Charleston, 1777-1780*, debuted as the #1 *New York Times* nonfiction bestseller.

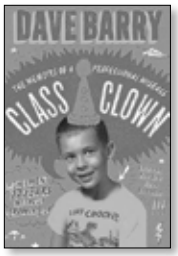
Atkinson is a three-time Pulitzer Prize recipient: the 1982 Pulitzer Prize for National Reporting, the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service (as part of The Washington Post staff), and the 2003 Pulitzer Prize in History for *An Army at Dawn*.

Holding a bachelor's degree from East Carolina University and a master's in English literature from the University of Chicago, Atkinson began as a newspaper reporter in Kansas and later worked for *The Kansas City Times* and *The Washington Post*, where he won multiple awards for his coverage. He later served as *The Washington Post*'s bureau chief in Berlin and covered significant conflicts such as the Persian Gulf War and the Iraq invasion.



DAVE BARRY

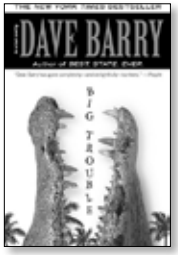
Dave Barry began his journalism career at the *Daily Local News* in Pennsylvania, where he developed his distinctive comedic style as a local reporter and editor. He subsequently gained fame for his nationally syndicated *Miami Herald* column, which ran from 1983 to 2005 and appeared in more than 500 newspapers across the U.S. and internationally. He catapulted to national stardom when he won the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary while at the *Miami Herald*, becoming one of the rare humorists to receive journalism's highest honor. The Pulitzer committee praised him for using humor to offer fresh insights into serious topics.



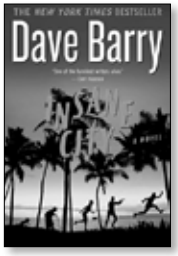
Beyond his newspaper columns, Barry is renowned for dozens of best-selling books, including fiction, essay collections, children's novels, and satirical nonfiction. Some of his notable titles include *Dave Barry Turns 40*, *Dave Barry Is Not Taking This Sitting Down*, and *Lessons From Lucy: The Simple Joys of an Old, Happy Dog*.



Along with Ridley Pearson, Barry co-wrote the *Peter and the Starcatchers* young-adult series, one of which was adapted into the Tony Award–winning Broadway play *Peter and the Starcatcher*. His work also inspired the CBS sitcom *Dave's World*, and his role in popularizing International Talk Like a Pirate Day has left a quirky mark on American humor.



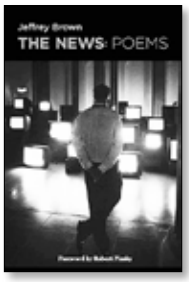
Barry lives in Miami with his wife, sportswriter Michelle Kaufman, and continues to write, lecture, and perform, remaining a beloved voice in American humor more than four decades into his career.





JEFFREY BROWN

Jeffrey Brown is Senior Correspondent and Chief Arts Correspondent for PBS *NewsHour*, public television's prestigious nightly news program viewed by millions. During his 30-year career with the *NewsHour*, he has served as co-anchor, studio moderator, and field reporter on a wide range of national and international issues.



Brown has interviewed numerous leading American and international newsmakers, moderated studio discussions on a vast array of topics, and reported from across the United States and other regions of the globe. As an arts correspondent, he has profiled many of the world's leading writers, musicians, and other artists. As senior national affairs producer for over a decade, he helped shape the program's coverage of the economy, healthcare, social policy, culture, and other areas. In addition, he leads *NewsHour's* extensive coverage of arts and culture, called "Canvas." He also hosts the monthly book club, "Now Read This," a collaboration with *The New York Times*. His work as correspondent and producer has garnered the Peabody Award, a News & Documentary Emmy Award, and several Cine Golden Eagle Awards.

His acclaimed book of prose and poetry, *The News*, explores the intersections between politics and poetry. His poetry has been selected for inclusion in the Academy of American Poets' *365 Poems* anthology.

Before joining the *NewsHour*, Brown produced numerous public television series for Media & Society Seminars, an independent production company headed by Fred W. Friendly.

He attended UC Berkeley, Berkeley School of Law, and Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism.

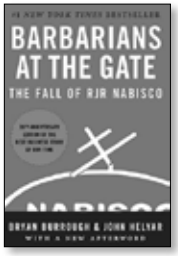


BRYAN BURROUGH

Bryan Burrough's insightful commentary and investigative journalism have solidified his reputation as a leading figure in American narrative nonfiction. His blockbuster bestseller, *Barbarians at the Gate*, about the leveraged buyout of RJR Nabisco, is considered a classic in business literature. *The New York Times* described the book as a "landmark of corporate journalism." The HBO series based on the book was widely recognized for its portrayal of corporate culture and boardroom drama.



Burrough began his career at *The Wall Street Journal*, where he earned critical acclaim, winning the prestigious Gerald Loeb Award for financial journalism three times.



Burrough has authored or co-authored eight books, including four *New York Times* bestsellers: *Public Enemies*, which chronicles America's crime wave and the birth of the FBI; *The Big Rich*, which explores Texas oil dynasties; and *Forget the Alamo*, which challenges historical myths.

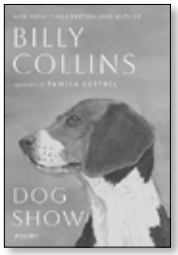


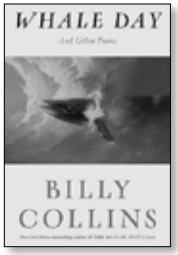
His latest book, *The Gunfighters: How Texas Made the West Wild*, offers a sweeping, deeply researched history of how Texas's culture of violence and mythmaking shaped the lawlessness and legends of the American West.

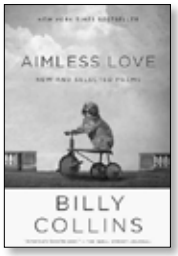
Burrough has been a correspondent for *Vanity Fair* since 1992 and is a longtime Editor at Large at *Texas Monthly*. He earned a B.A. in journalism from the University of Missouri School of Journalism.



LAURA WILSON







BILLY COLLINS

New York Times bestselling author and former U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins has been called "America's favorite poet," and his impact on contemporary American poetry cannot be understated.

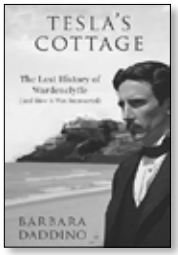
In addition to his new witty and heartfelt collection of poems, *Dog Show*, Collins has written 15 collections of poetry, and his works have garnered critical acclaim and commercial success, with several becoming *New York Times* bestsellers. He has received numerous prestigious awards and honors throughout his career. His poetry has gained both critical acclaim and popular appeal, breaking sales records and reaching wide audiences through readings and radio appearances.

Collins' work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, and *The American Scholar*. He is a Guggenheim fellow and a New York Public Library "Literary Lion."

After earning his B.A. in English from the College of the Holy Cross, Collins went on to earn both an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Romantic Poetry from UC Riverside. He began a long teaching career at Lehman College in the Bronx, part of the City University of New York, where he ultimately became a Distinguished Professor before retiring in 2016. Collins also taught at Columbia University, Sarah Lawrence College, and SUNY Stony Brook Southampton.

After serving as the U.S. Poet Laureate from 2001 to 2003, he served as New York State Poet Laureate from 2004 to 2006.





BARBARA DADDINO

Barbara Daddino is an author, educator, and researcher best known for her 2025 book *Tesla's Cottage: The Lost History of Nikola Tesla at Wardenclyffe (and How It Was Recovered)*. Her writing reflects both literary craftsmanship and historical curiosity, blending personal narrative with investigative biography.

In *Tesla's Cottage*, Daddino recounts how she and her partner discovered that their Long Island home once belonged to inventor Nikola Tesla, sparking a ten-year search to uncover the truth of his time there.

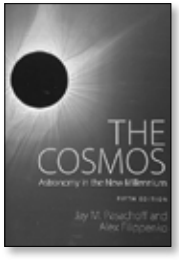
She was awarded the honorary title of Tesla Ambassador by the Ministry of Culture and Education of Serbia.

Daddino holds an MFA in creative writing from New York University. Her essays and movie reviews have appeared in Newsday and on PBS. She has also taught English and creative writing at Commack Public Schools and creative writing at NYU as an adjunct professor.



ALEX FILIPPENKO

Renowned UC Berkeley astronomy researcher and professor Alex Filippenko is one of the world's most cited and accomplished astrophysicists and the only person to have been a member of both teams that revealed the accelerating expansion of the universe, a discovery that was honored with the 2011 Nobel Prize in Physics to the teams' leaders.



His pioneering research has profoundly shaped modern understanding of supernovae, black holes, and the accelerating expansion of the universe. He has been on the U.C. Berkeley faculty since 1986 and has been voted the "Best Professor" on campus a record nine times.

Filippenko received a B.A. in physics from UC Santa Barbara and a Ph.D. in astronomy from Caltech.

A prolific scholar, Filippenko has authored or coauthored more than 1,200 scientific papers, making him one of the world's most highly cited astronomers. His many honors include the Gruber Prize in Cosmology, Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics, and the Carnegie/CASE U.S. National Professor of the Year award. His research focuses on supernovae and active galaxies at optical, ultraviolet, and near-infrared wavelengths, as well as on black holes, gamma-ray bursts, and the expansion of the Universe.



GLADSTONE INSTITUTES

DR. STEVE FINKBEINER

Dr. Steve Finkbeiner is a renowned neuroscientist and physician, recognized for his pioneering work on neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and ALS. His work sits at the intersection of science, technology, and medicine. His insight into the urgent search for cures to devastating neurological diseases makes him both inspiring and deeply relevant to audiences interested in science, technology, or the future of medicine.

Dr. Finkbeiner serves as the Director of the Center for Systems and Therapeutics and the Taube/Koret Center for Neurodegenerative Disease Research at the Gladstone Institutes, as well as a Professor of Neurology and Physiology at UCSF. His lab's integration of neuroscience, engineering, and computational biology places him at the forefront of modern brain research.

His research has revolutionized how scientists study brain cell function and failure. He has developed innovative imaging techniques that allow long-term observation of living neurons—especially his automated microscope system ("the robotic microscope"), which can track individual cells over time. This technology has led to crucial discoveries about how protein misfolding, cellular stress, and genetic mutations contribute to neuron death in degenerative diseases.

Dr. Finkbeiner earned his MD and PhD in Medicine and Neuroscience from Yale University, where he trained at the intersection of clinical medicine and molecular neuroscience. He then completed neurology residency training at UCSF, where he has remained an influential researcher and faculty member.

The Sonoma Valley Authors Festival extends its gratitude to Dr. Steve Finkbeiner for his engaging and insightful presentation at the Benefactors Dinner, held Thursday evening at the Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn and generously hosted by Caroline and Jon Sebastiani.



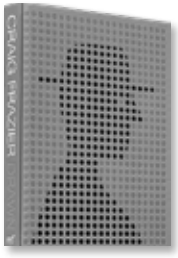
CRAIG FRAZIER

Craig Frazier has been illustrating the stories and communication of American businesses for more than 25 years. His illustration style is among the most distinctive and recognized in the country, characterized by humor, irony, and simplicity.

Frazier is an award-winning graphic designer whose illustrations have been featured in *The New York Times*, *Time* magazine, and *The Wall Street Journal*. He has designed eight popular stamps for the U.S. Postal Service and has written and illustrated almost a dozen children's books.



His series of picture books about Stanley, a character who sees things differently, includes *Stanley Mows the Lawn*, which earned him the Society of Illustrators Silver Medal. Frazier's new monograph, *Drawn*, was released in early 2024. A compendium of illustration and design spanning 45 years, the book features more than 400 illustrations and sketches curated from his long and illustrious career.



Frasier has received numerous awards from *Communication Arts*, The New York Art Director's Club, *Print* magazine, Society of Illustrators, American Illustration, and *Graphis*. Frazier was published as one of the top 100 illustrators in 100 Illustrators in 2013 and was also featured three times in *Graphis* magazine in 2003, 2004, and 2018.



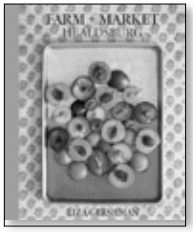
Frazier is a founding member of the San Francisco Chapter of the AIGA, and he is a frequent lecturer at universities and design conferences.

SVAF purchased Frazier's illustration of the bird man for its logo back in 2017. The festival has been blessed to have limited use of dozens of his illustrations in its marketing materials ever since, creating the "signature look" of the Sonoma Valley Authors Festival, for which the Freemans are ever grateful. In addition, Frazier has taught short seminars at Sonoma Valley High School during the Festival for several years.

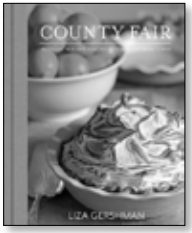


LIZA GERSHMAN

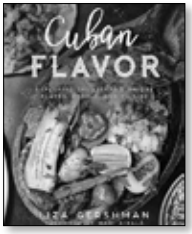
Liza Gershman is a multidisciplinary storyteller, author of 19 books, and Winner of the Gourmand World Cookbook Award (2018). She has nearly two decades of industry experience across all facets of publishing, commercial and editorial photography, writing and design, art direction, and creative direction. She is also a former associate chair of photography at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD).



Gershman's 2021 book, *County Fair: Nostalgic Blue Ribbon Winning Recipes From America's Small Towns*, was featured by *Smithsonian Magazine* as one of the *Ten Best Books About Food of 2021*, and her book, *Cuban Flavor*, won the Gourmand World Cookbook Award.



In her new book, *Farm + Market: Healdsburg*, Gershman turns her lens toward one of America's most dynamic regional food communities, and delves into the how and why of farmers markets as critical and beloved cultural anchors.

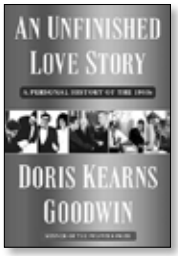


Featured on CBS, in *Travel & Leisure*, and on NPR, as well as in numerous local and national media, Gershman has also spoken on the campuses of LinkedIn, Google, Uber, Twitter, Oracle, and Disney. In 2010, she was Governor Jerry Brown's campaign photographer, and in 2014 was a photographer for America's Cup.



DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN

Doris Kearns Goodwin is a world-renowned presidential historian, public speaker, and Pulitzer Prize-winning, *New York Times* #1 best-selling author. She is celebrating the success of her eighth book, the stirring memoir, *An Unfinished Love Story: A Personal History of the 1960s*, now in paperback.

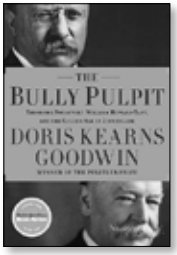


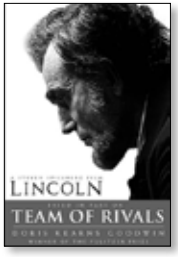
Goodwin's remarkable career began when, as a 24-year-old Harvard graduate student, she was selected to join the White House Fellows, one of America's most prestigious programs for leadership and public service. Goodwin worked with Lyndon Johnson in the White House and later assisted him in the writing of his memoirs.

That experience sparked her first major work, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*, which became a national bestseller and earned widespread critical acclaim. In 2019, the book was re-released with a new foreword highlighting LBJ's enduring domestic achievements.



Goodwin was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II*. *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys* was adapted into an award-winning five-part television miniseries. Her sixth book, *The Bully Pulpit: Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and the Golden Age of Journalism*, won the Carnegie Medal and is being developed into a film. Goodwin's *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* served as the basis for Steven Spielberg's hit film *Lincoln* and was awarded the prestigious Lincoln Prize, the inaugural Book Prize for American History, and the Lincoln Leadership Prize.





Well known for her appearances and commentary on television, Goodwin is a trusted voice in documentaries, including Ken Burns' *The History of Baseball* and *The Roosevelts: An Intimate History*; and on news and cable networks, and shows including *Meet The Press* and *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*.



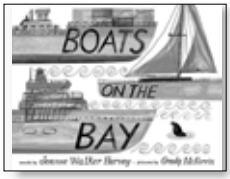
JEANNE WALKER HARVEY

For more than 30 years, bestselling children's book author Jeanne Walker Harvey has delighted young minds with her engaging storytelling designed to connect inquisitive children with inspiring role models.

Harvey's award-winning picture book biographies centered on themes of art, science, and perseverance, include: *Ablaze with Color: A Story of Painter Alma Thomas* (winner of the 2022 Northern California Book Awards – Children's Literature Younger Readers, NAACP Image Award Nominee, Jane Addams Children's Book Award finalist), *Else B. in the Sea: The Woman Who Painted the Wonders of the Deep*, *Dressing Up The Stars: The Story of Movie Costume Designer Edith Head*, and *Maya Lin: Artist-Architect of Light and Lines*.



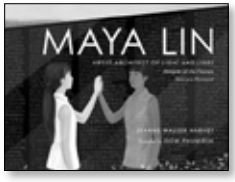
Her latest, *The Glass Pyramid: The Louvre Museum and Architect I.M Pei*, was published in mid-2025



Harvey has also written two popular picture books about marine mammal rescue stories, *Astro the Stellar Sea Lion* and *Honey Girl: The Hawaiian Monk Seal*, and also the iconic San Francisco Bay-inspired picture book *Boats on the Bay*.



Harvey is the featured author of SVAF's Young Readers Program.



A graduate with distinction of Stanford University and UC Davis King Hall School of Law, Harvey has worn many job hats, ranging from roller coaster operator to long-time docent at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.



JOHN HONCHARIW

John Honchariw has built his career on a simple but powerful idea: that animals are constantly talking to us — we just need better tools to listen.

As head of Companion, an AI-driven pet care company, Honchariw's mission centers on using AI and machine learning to deepen understanding of pets, leveraging advanced cameras and intelligent software to process behavioral signals and movement data that are often invisible to the human eye.

It can detect health problems before owners even notice. Skeletal analysis can reveal potential pain or the onset of osteoarthritis, and candid footage can capture slow-moving changes in patterns that vets can use to diagnose conditions earlier.

His technology is designed to enhance — not replace — veterinary judgment, giving clinicians new tools to make faster, better-informed decisions.

Honchariw started his career at Bain & Company, then held product and business development roles at Amprius, AppDirect, and Google's early-stage technology units.

Honchariw holds a BS in Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering and an ME in Systems Engineering from Cornell University.



SHALIE JONKER

Former technology executive Shalie Jonker pivoted from a successful career in Silicon Valley to co-found and co-own Noble Goat Farm, a thriving, no-till, no-spray working produce farm located at the base of Dry Creek Valley in Healdsburg.

Jonker exemplifies a new generation of purpose-driven farmers, using innovation and business expertise to support community-driven farming and strengthen local food systems. Jonker also serves as Board Chair of the Healdsburg Certified Farmers' Market, guiding its growth and expanding its community partnerships. Under her leadership, HCFM is also working on a major new transition - relocating into the newly remodeled Foley Family Community Pavilion.

Prior to farming, Jonker held leadership roles at Google and Box. At Google, she played an integral role in the explosive growth of Google Maps, overseeing marketing, customer experience, online growth, and business analytics. Later, at Box—a cloud content management company—she served as senior director of customer success and global renewals.

She holds a B.S. in Finance and Marketing from the University of Kansas and an MBA from Stanford Graduate School of Business, where she focused on entrepreneurship and sustainable business.



The Miami Herald

MICHELLE KAUFMAN

Over her nearly four decades in sports reporting, acclaimed *Miami Herald* journalist Michelle Kaufman has covered 14 Olympic Games, six World Cups, numerous Wimbledons, French Opens, and US Opens, as well as Super Bowls, NBA Finals, World Series, and Final Fours.

Widely recognized as a dynamic and important voice in sports journalism, Kaufman is renowned for her coverage of some of the world's biggest sporting events and her commitment to nurturing the next generation of journalists.

Beyond reporting, Kaufman teaches sports reporting at the University of Miami, where she has mentored emerging journalists for over 20 years. Her lively and popular classroom is seen as a launchpad for many successful careers in sports media.

Kaufman earned a degree in journalism and English from the University of Miami, actively contributing to the student newspaper during her studies. Her professional journey began at the *St. Petersburg Times*, where she broke barriers as one of the few women covering the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers. She later joined the *Detroit Free Press*, focusing on national sports and international competitions, before returning to Florida to join *The Miami Herald* in 1996, where she continues to write her widely read Sunday sports column. She has also contributed to several anthologies, including *A Kind of Grace: A Treasury of Sportswriting by Women* and *Nike Is a Goddess: The History of Women's Sports*.

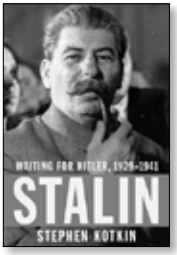
She lives in Miami and is married to columnist and author Dave Barry.

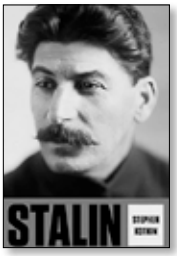


STEPHEN KOTKIN

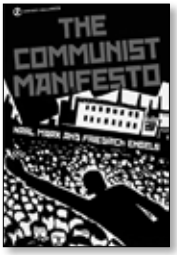
For more than 30 years, Stephen Koktin has mentored new generations of Russian history scholars at Princeton University, and his research and writing have completely reshaped our understanding of Stalin, the Soviet Union, and 20th-century history.

As a leading authority on geopolitics and global history, his acclaimed works include *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*, *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970–2000*, and the ongoing three-volume Stalin biography—*Stalin: Paradoxes of Power, 1878–1928* and *Stalin: Waiting for Hitler, 1929–1941* — recognized as landmark contributions to modern historical scholarship. In mid-2026, the eagerly awaited final book in his planned trilogy, covering 1942–1953, will be released.

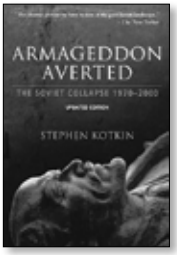




Kotkin is the Kleinheinz Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution and a senior fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford University. A Guggenheim, NEH, and ACLS fellow, Kotkin also writes frequently for *Foreign Affairs*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and the *Times Literary Supplement*, and advises institutions on authoritarian politics and global risk.



He earned his B.A. from the University of Rochester and his M.A. and Ph.D. in history from the University of California, Berkeley.





JULIANA SOHN

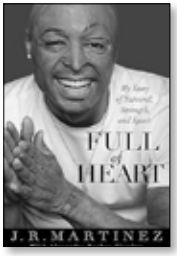
SOYOUNG LEE

Soyoung Lee is a Korean-born art historian, curator, and museum leader who serves as the Barbara Bass Bakar Director and CEO of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, one of the largest and most significant institutions dedicated to Asian and Asian American art in the United States. Lee began her tenure in April 2025, succeeding longtime director Jay Xu, and became the museum's first woman and first Korean-born leader in that role.

Lee began her curatorial career at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, where she joined in 2003 as the museum's first curator of Korean art. Over 15 years, she significantly expanded the Met's Korean art collection and produced acclaimed exhibitions, such as *Silla: Korea's Golden Kingdom* (2013) and *Diamond Mountains: Travel and Nostalgia in Korean Art* (2018). In 2018, she was named Chief Curator at the Harvard Art Museums, where she led major exhibitions and the museum's influential training program for emerging curators.

Born in Jakarta, Indonesia, to a South Korean diplomat, Lee spent her early years living internationally before settling in the United States as a teenager. She earned her B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in art history from Columbia University, specializing in Korean and East Asian art.





J.R. MARTINEZ

J.R. Martinez is a burn survivor, Army Veteran, actor, *New York Times* best-selling author, motivational speaker, and advocate. He's a keynote speaker at major events, traveling the world to spread his message of resilience and optimism.

Martinez was born in Shreveport, Louisiana. His mother was an immigrant from El Salvador, and his two sisters were raised there. At age 9, he and his mother moved to Hope, Arkansas, where he was a high school football star.

He joined the U.S. Army after high school and underwent Basic and Advanced Training at Fort Benning, Georgia. In 2003, he was on a routine patrol when his Humvee hit a roadside bomb. In the years following, Martinez had over 34 surgeries, including multiple skin grafts and cosmetic surgeries.

During his recovery, a nurse asked him to speak to a burn patient in the hospital who had just seen his body for the first time. He discovered he found solace in helping other wounded survivors, and that inspiration is often a two-way street.

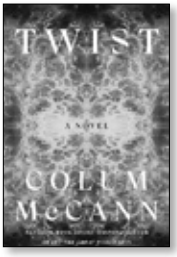
Since then, Martinez has traveled the world as a motivational speaker. He says, "My story may be unique, but my message is universal: change isn't bad if you are willing to adapt. Your path in life is decided by your own ability to adapt and overcome."



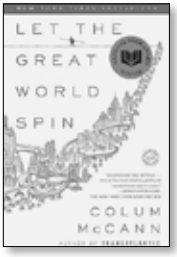
COLUM MCCANN

Irish author Colum McCann has created some of the defining works of contemporary fiction. His landmark novel *Let the Great World Spin*, inspired by Philippe Petit's breathtaking tightrope walk between the Twin Towers, became a global phenomenon and earned the National Book Award.

Across 13 books translated into more than 40 languages, McCann has received some of the world's most prestigious honors, including the International Dublin Literary Prize, France's Chevalier des Arts et Lettres, the National Jewish Book Award, and even an Academy Award. His novel *Apeirogon*, a searing and humane exploration of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, was longlisted for the Booker Prize. His electrifying new novel, *Twist*, brings the underwater world of free diving to vivid life.

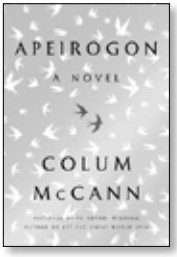


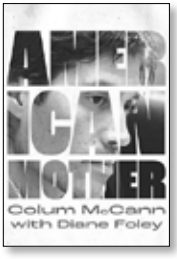
McCann studied journalism at the Dublin Institute of Technology and earned his B.S. from the University of Texas at Austin. Early in his career, he worked as a reporter for several Irish newspapers, including *The Irish Press*, where he was named Young Journalist of the Year. He has since taught creative writing at Hunter College in New York.



He is also the cofounder of Narrative 4, an international nonprofit dedicated to building empathy through the exchange of personal stories—reflecting his enduring belief in storytelling as a force for connection and understanding.

Born and raised in Dublin, McCann now lives in New York City.



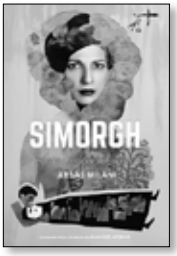




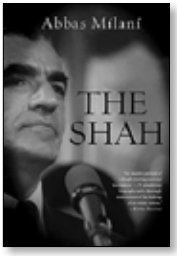
ABBAS MILANI

As the director of Iranian Studies at Stanford University, Abbas Milani possesses unparalleled expertise in U.S.-Iran relations and in Iranian cultural, political, and security issues.

Milani gained widespread international recognition following the publication of his book, *The Shah*, in 2011, which received universal acclaim. Reviewers praised its depth of scholarship and Milani's impartiality in addressing such a controversial topic, with David C. Acheson of the *Washington Times* describing it as "impressive" in its research and analysis and Acheson stating that *The Shah* is "likely to be the definitive biography of its subject."



His new book, *Simorgh: Portraits on My Mind*, is an entralling look at some of Iran's most renowned writers, politicians, scholars, and activists - contemporaries of Milani and their struggles amidst the saga of the rise of the Islamic regime in Iran.



Milani joined Stanford in 2003 and became the founding director of the Iranian Studies Program in 2005. He also worked with two colleagues to launch the Iran Democracy Project at the Hoover Institution, where he is a research fellow and co-director.

Previously, Milani was a research fellow at the Iranian Center for Social Research and an assistant professor at the National University of Iran. He taught at Tehran University's Faculty of Law and Political Science, where he also served on the Board of Directors of the university's Center for International Relations.

Milani served for 14 years as Chair of the Political Science Department at Notre Dame de Namur University. He was a Research Fellow at the U.C. Berkeley's Middle East Center for eight years.



GLADSTONE INSTITUTES

KATIE POLLARD

Katherine Snowden Pollard is Director of the Gladstone Institute of Data Science and Biotechnology and a professor in the Department of Epidemiology & Biostatistics at UCSF.

The Pollard lab at Gladstone Institutes develops computer models that enable them to decode how genomes work, evolve and break in disease. Their analyses of massive datasets predicted new causes for human genetic diseases and revealed the parts of the human genome thatmake us different from chimpanzees and other species. The team's open-source software fuels discoveries in labs and classrooms worldwide. Pollard's current focus is on accelerating biomedical research through building platforms that combine AI modeling with genome editing to establish cause and effect in human cells in the lab.

Pollard earned her B.A. in anthropology and mathematics from Pomona College in 1995. She went on to complete an M.S. and Ph.D. in Biostatistics at UC Berkeley in 2003.

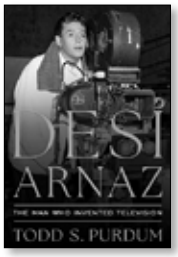
Pollard is an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine, an American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Fellow, and she serves as a Chan Zuckerberg Biohub Investigator.



JEFFREY MACMILLAN

TODD S. PURDUM

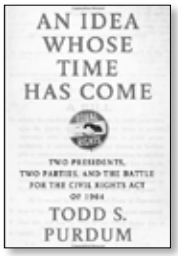
Todd S. Purdum is an accomplished journalist, author, and biographer whose career spans decades of incisive political and cultural reporting. Purdum has served as a national correspondent and White House reporter for *The New York Times*, a senior writer at *Vanity Fair*, and a staff writer at *The Atlantic*. His writing is marked by wit, empathy, and a deep curiosity about the forces that shape American life.



His new book, *Desi Arnaz: The Man Who Invented Television*, reclaims Arnaz's reputation as not just Lucille Ball's husband or TV co-star, but as one of the most innovative producers and entrepreneurs in television history. *Publishers Weekly* called it a "vividly rendered tale of a TV tycoon's spectacular rise and ignominious fall."



Purdum is the author of several acclaimed works of nonfiction. Before turning his attention to Arnaz, he wrote *Something Wonderful: Rodgers and Hammerstein's Broadway Revolution*, an authoritative and lively account of how the legendary songwriting duo transformed American theater. He also penned *An Idea Whose Time Has Come: Two Presidents, Two Parties, and the Battle for the Civil Rights Act of 1964*, praised for its depth of research and narrative drive.

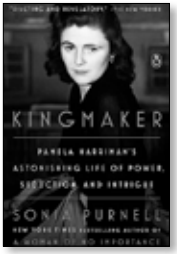


Purdum is a graduate of Princeton University.



SONIA PURNELL

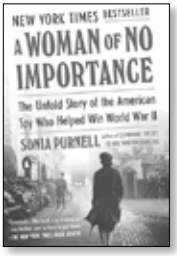
Sonia Purnell is a British journalist, biographer, and bestselling author renowned for her vivid storytelling, meticulous research, and ability to bring overlooked historical figures vividly to life. Her work has sold more than a million copies and been optioned by several leading filmmakers.



Purnell's latest book, *Kingmaker: Pamela Harriman's Astonishing Life of Power, Seduction & Intrigue*, has been named a Book of the Year by 15 media outlets, including *The Guardian*, *The Economist*, and *The New Yorker*.



Purnell's first book, the unauthorized biography of Boris Johnson called *Just Boris: A Tale of Blond Ambition*, was the first to challenge Johnson's track record and integrity. It changed the national debate and remains the definitive biography. Her second book, *Clementine* (a finalist for the Plutarch Prize), revealed for the first time the vital role played by Winston Churchill's wife, Clementine, in his career.



Purnell's third book, *A Woman of No Importance*, is the electrifying true-life tale of Virginia Hall, a female spy in WWII. It became an instant *New York Times* bestseller and is now being adapted into a film by JJ Abrams.



A graduate of Sussex University, Purnell began her career in journalism as a correspondent at the *Daily Telegraph* and as an editor at the *Daily Mail*.

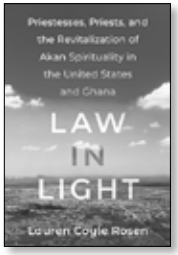


LAUREN COYLE ROSEN

Lauren Coyle Rosen is an award-winning cultural anthropologist, professor, author, singer-songwriter, and visual artist whose work spans law, culture, politics, and spirituality. Her upcoming book, *Goddess: A History*, is a sweeping global history of goddesses, exploring how their erasure from patriarchal religions has shaped society and celebrating the complexity and power of these divine feminine figures as essential to the foundations of our government, commerce, and social philosophies.



Coyle Rosen holds a J.D. from Harvard Law School, a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Chicago, and an A.B. in Anthropology from Princeton University. Her academic and creative work bridges scholarship and art, exploring the moral and imaginative dimensions of justice, beauty, and transcendence.



She is the author of twelve books, including four works of nonfiction and eight volumes of poetry and visual art. Her acclaimed scholarly book, *Fires of Gold: Law, Spirit, and Sacrificial Labor in Ghana*, examines the intersections of religion, economy, and postcolonial law in West Africa. Her most recent book, *Law in Light*, explores the spiritual and legal worlds of Akan path communities in Ghana and the United States, illuminating the role of female divine power and sacred governance in shaping moral life. She is also the co-author of musician Ani DiFranco's new biography, *The Spirit of Ani: Reflections on Spirituality, Feminism, Music, and Freedom*.

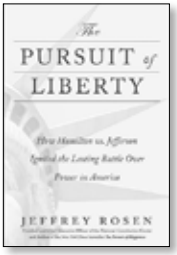




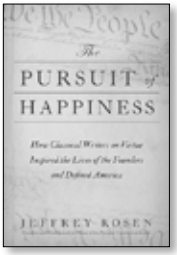


JEFFREY ROSEN

Jeffrey Rosen is one of America's most influential legal minds, seamlessly bridging the gap between academic scholarship and public discourse. In his latest book, *The Pursuit of Liberty: How Hamilton vs. Jefferson Ignited the Lasting Battle Over Power in America*, Rosen illuminates how the American founders' vision of liberty remains urgently relevant to contemporary challenges



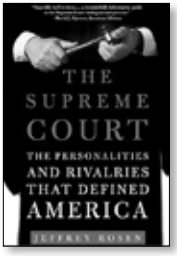
Rosen's previous *New York Times* bestseller, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, examines how that famous phrase defined the lives of our nation's Founders and became a linchpin of our democracy. His other acclaimed works include *The Most Democratic Branch*, *The Supreme Court: The Personalities and Rivalries That Defined America*, and *Louis D. Brandeis: American Prophet*.



Rosen is the former president of the National Constitution Center and currently serves as the legal affairs editor of *The New Republic* and a contributing editor for *The Atlantic*. His previously hosted *We the People*, featuring conversations with leading figures across the political spectrum, and his commentary appears regularly in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*.



A graduate of Harvard College, Oxford University (where he was a Marshall Scholar), and Yale Law School, Rosen brings exceptional credentials to his multifaceted career. He serves as a professor at George Washington University Law School, where his courses on constitutional law have influenced countless future legal professionals.





BEOWULF SHEEHAN

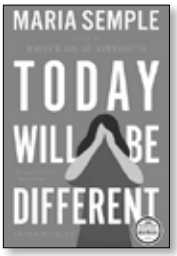
MARIA SEMPLE

Celebrated novelist Maria Semple's sharp wit and insight have made her a standout voice in contemporary fiction.

Semple launched her career as a television writer, contributing to iconic series like *Beverly Hills, 90210*, *Mad About You*, *Saturday Night Live*, *Ellen*, and *Arrested Development*. Her talents as a screenwriter have garnered her both Emmy and Writers Guild Award nominations.



The release of the novel *This One Is Mine* in 2008 marked Semple's transition to fiction, followed by the blockbuster bestselling *Where'd You Go, Bernadette*, a quirky, bittersweet novel inspired by her own move to Seattle. *Bernadette* captured critical acclaim and was adapted into a major motion picture, directed by Richard Linklater and starring Cate Blanchett. The novel won the American Library Association's Alex Award and was shortlisted for the Women's Prize for Fiction. Semple's third novel, *Today Will Be Different*, again showcased her genius for weaving humor and empathy into stories about flawed, unforgettable women. Her eagerly anticipated new novel, *Go Gentle*, was published in late April.



With work appearing in publications like *The New Yorker*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Huffington Post*, Semple continues to charm readers worldwide, and her novels have been translated into more than 40 languages.



Born in Santa Monica, Semple grew up partly in Spain and later in Los Angeles and Aspen, Colorado. She is the daughter of screenwriter Lorenzo Semple Jr., best known for writing the pilot for the *Batman* television series.

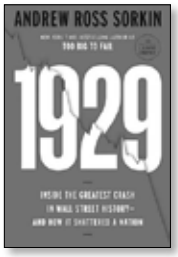


Semple earned a B.A. in English from Barnard College. She now lives in New York City.



ANDREW ROSS SORKIN

Andrew Ross Sorkin is one of the most prominent voices in finance and business journalism, and his new book, *1929*, has been hailed by *The Wall Street Journal* as "one of the best narrative histories [we've] read."



Sorkin's previous blockbuster bestseller, *Too Big to Fail*, chronicled the events of the 2008 financial crisis and was adapted into an HBO movie in 2011. He is also the co-creator of the acclaimed Showtime drama *Billions*.

Sorkin is a frequent guest on national television and radio programs and a lecturer at universities across the country. He has appeared on NBC's *The Today Show*, PBS's *NewsHour*, HBO's *Real Time with Bill Maher*, NPR's *Talk of the Nation*, and many others.



Sorkin joined *The New York Times* as a student intern while still in high school and published dozens of articles for the paper while still an undergraduate at Cornell University. After university, he started at *The Times* full-time, initially covering mergers and acquisitions from London, and rapidly establishing himself as one of the leading voices in financial journalism.

Sorkin serves as a financial columnist at *The New York Times*, where he is also the founder and editor-at-large of *DealBook*, and co-anchors CNBC's *Squawk Box*. Over the years, Sorkin has been at the forefront of Wall Street news, and he is recognized as one of the preeminent interviewers of business leaders, policymakers, and cultural figures.

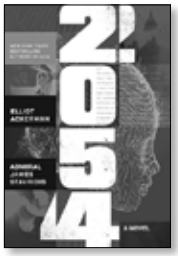


TIM LLEWELLYN

ADMIRAL JAMES STAVRIDIS

Admiral James Stavridis' legendary 37-year career includes serving as the first naval Supreme Allied Commander of NATO (2009–2013), overseeing military operations in Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, the Balkans, and global counter-piracy initiatives. He also led U.S. Southern Command, directing American military activities throughout Latin America (2006–2009). Stavridis commanded the USS Barry, Destroyer Squadron 21, and the Enterprise Carrier Strike Group, earning the Battenberg Cup and Navy League John Paul Jones Award for inspirational leadership.







Admiral Stavridis played key roles in strategic planning for the Navy, as senior military assistant to top Pentagon officials, and led the Navy's operational innovation group, Deep Blue, following 9/11. After retiring, Stavridis served as Dean of the Fletcher School at Tufts University and remains a prominent author, speaker, and expert in global affairs, exemplifying exceptional leadership and visionary thinking in both military and civilian spheres.

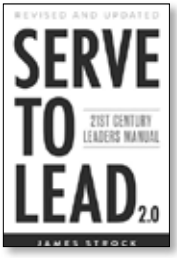
Writing through the lens of global geopolitics and the security challenges in the late 21st century, Admiral Stavridis is the bestselling author of *2034: A Novel of the Next World War*, *2054: A Novel*, and the new follow-up, *2084: A Novel of the Climate War*, with co-writer Elliot Ackerman.

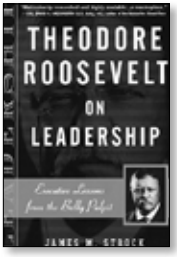
Admiral Stavridis graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy, and his career is marked by more than 50 medals, including 28 from foreign nations, and his commitment to international partnership, military innovation, and security.



JAMES STROCK

James Strock is a bestselling author of four books on service, politics, and leadership, including *Theodore Roosevelt on Leadership: Executive Lessons from the Bully Pulpit* and *Disrupt Politics: Reset Washington*. He writes the *'Next Nationalism'* on Substack and hosts the *'Serve to Lead'* podcast.



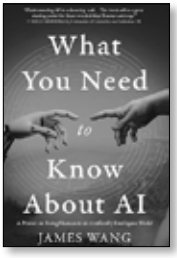


Strock tours the country speaking on these topics. In addition to being a dynamic writer and speaker, he is an entrepreneur and reformer in business and government. Strock's latest book, *Serve to Lead 2.0: 21st Century Leaders Manual*, implores organizations and individuals to achieve their greatest potential—and explains exactly how they can.

Strock served as the founding secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency and as chief law enforcement officer of the United States EPA. Strock also serves as a trustee of the Theodore Roosevelt Association and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Strock received a bachelor's degree from Harvard College (Phi Beta Kappa) and a juris doctor from Harvard Law School. He subsequently attended New College, Oxford for a year, sponsored by the Ambassadorial Scholarships program of Rotary International. He served to captain in the reserves, Judge Advocate General of the U.S. Army, 1989-96. He received the Ross Essay Prize of the American Bar Association in 1985.





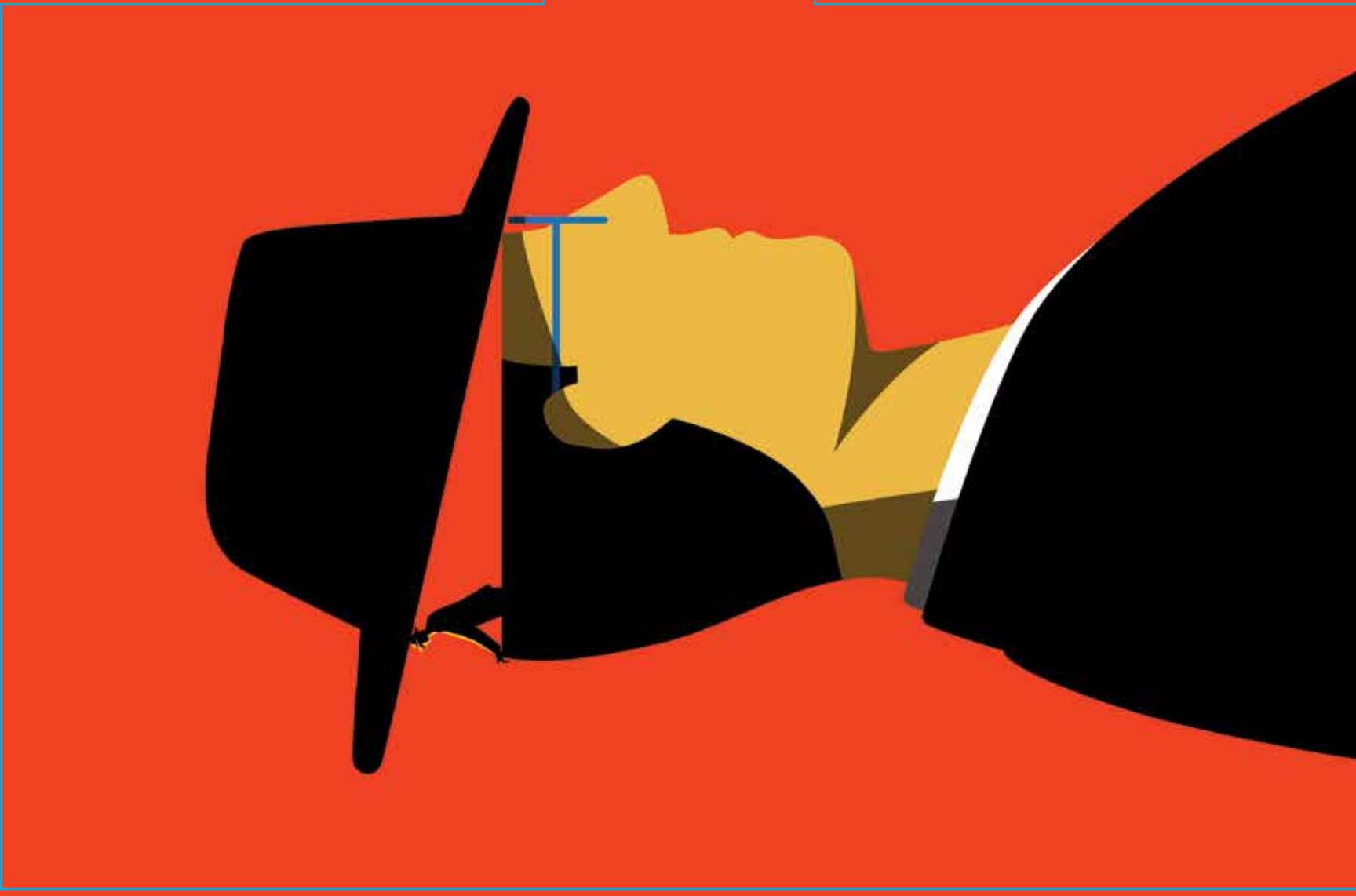
JAMES WANG

James Wang is a venture capitalist and technologist at the forefront of the deep-tech revolution. As General Partner at Creative Ventures, he leads investments in artificial intelligence, synthetic biology, and advanced materials — technologies redefining how humanity works, heals, and creates. Since 2016, his fund has backed visionary founders aiming to solve some of the 21st century's toughest problems.

Before venture capital, Wang helped shape strategies at Bridgewater Associates, the world's largest hedge fund, and later joined X, Google's moonshot lab, where he supported bold experiments pushing science fiction toward reality. Today, he serves on the boards of pioneering companies in AI, healthcare, and robotics, championing innovation that scales responsibly.

A thought leader and educator, Wang is a regular guest lecturer at UC Berkeley, where he speaks about entrepreneurship and startup financing. His widely read Substack, *Weighty Thoughts*, explores the intersection of technology, economics, and society. His new book, *What You Need to Know About AI*, is a clear and compelling guide to the forces shaping our intelligent future.

Wang received his undergraduate degree from Dartmouth College, his master's of science in computer science from Georgia Tech, and his MBA from U.C. Berkeley.



AUSTIN PHELPS

"Wear the old coat and buy the new book."

GARRISON KEILLOR

"A book is a gift you can open again and again."

STRICKLAND GILLIAN

"You may have tangible wealth untold; caskets of jewels and coffers of gold. Richer than I you can never be. I had a mother who read to me."



R. DAVID FREEMAN

Festival Co-Founder

David Freeman has a deep passion for ideas, literature, and community engagement. He is the co-founder, along with his wife Ginny, of the Sonoma Valley Authors Festival, an annual gathering that brings together world-class authors, thought leaders in science, technology, and medicine, for a weekend of inspiration and dialogue.

Retiring from San Francisco-based Ashfield Capital Partners in 2015, he spent three decades in the financial services industry, where he held senior management positions at Winthrop Associates in Houston, Washington, D.C., and New York, as well as with Bessemer Trust NA in New York. As a partner at Ashfield, he directed all marketing relationships with institutional and third-party distribution partners.

His community involvement has included serving as a Board Member of the Merola Opera Program, affiliated with San Francisco Opera; a Board Member of Episcopal Charities; a Vestry Member of St. Mary the Virgin Episcopal Church; and as President of the Northern California Chapter of the American Liver Foundation.



GINNY GUSTAFSON FREEMAN

Festival Co-Founder

Ginny Freeman has spent her life trying to engage both the left and right sides of her brain! After graduating from Purdue University with a BS in Business, she was recruited by Arthur Andersen & Company, then the largest accounting firm in the world, to work as a programmer in their consulting group in their Chicago Headquarters.

She relocated to San Francisco and worked for Bank of America, then the largest bank in the world, as a technical support representative, converting bank customers from manual payroll systems to the bank's computerized payroll system.

She then joined IBM, then the largest computer company in the world, where she had an 18-year career in sales, staff, and management. One of the most memorable assignments was selling the newly invented IBM Personal Computers from a retail store in downtown San Francisco, much like today's Apple Stores with Genius Bars.

After 22 years in the corporate world, Ginny became self–employed and spent the next 15 years as a Personal Assistant to high net worth families and non-profits doing both creative and technical work; her last contract lasted nine years.

Through the Academy of Arts online study, she learned Photoshop, then was retained by a prominent SF family to manage the digital capture, storage, printing, and binding of over 15,000 images from a set of family photo albums that spanned 50 years.

Ginny and David work on all aspects of the Festival, Students Day, Authors on the Plaza, and the Virtual Festival, including author and speaker recruitment, fundraising, and working with vendors and their outstanding team of contractors. As the Secretary/Treasurer of the non-profit, Ginny manages online sales, a donor management system, and QuickBooks accounting and reporting.



ELAINE PETROCELLI

Founder & President of Book Passage

Elaine Petrocelli, who founded Book Passage bookstore 50 years ago, assists in selecting and securing authors to participate in the Festival.

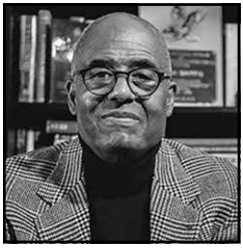
In addition to operating two successful bookstores in Corte Madera and the Ferry Building in San Francisco, Elaine organizes approximately 900 in-person and virtual speaker events each year. These include author presentations at her bookstores as well as functions for the Kidney Foundation, Dominican College and other organizations. Top publishers include Book Passage on any major book tour for their authors. Book Passage publishes a monthly newsletter that includes recommended new books, classes, and information on upcoming speaker engagement at the two bookstores. BookPassage.com

MODERATORS AND EMCEES



JEFFREY BROWN

Jeffrey Brown is the award-winning Senior Correspondent and Chief Arts Correspondent for PBS NewsHour, public television's prestigious nightly news program viewed by millions. In a career spanning more than thirty years at the NewsHour, Brown has interviewed numerous leading American and international newsmakers, moderated studio discussions on a vast array of topics, and reported from across the United States and around the globe. He has won a number of awards, including a News & Documentary Emmy Award, a Peabody Award, and multiple CINE Golden Eagle Awards. He is also a published poet.



NOAH GRIFFIN

Harvard-trained lawyer and media personality, Noah Griffin, is a Bay Area native. He has hosted talk radio shows on KGO, KFRC and K-101, and written op-ed pieces for the San Francisco Examiner, the Boston Globe and the Marin Independent Journal. In addition to his work in media and music, Griffin had a long career in public affairs, serving in an administrative capacity to former San Francisco Mayor Frank Jordan and U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein.



JAMES STROCK

James Strock writes *The Next Nationalism* on Substack and hosts the *Serve to Lead* podcast. He is a bestselling author of four books on service, politics and leadership, including *Theodore Roosevelt on Leadership: Executive Lessons from the Bully Pulpit* and *Disrupt Politics: Reset Washington*, and tours the country speaking on these topics. In addition to being a dynamic writer and speaker, Strock is an entrepreneur and reformer in business and government. His latest book, *Serve to Lead 2.0: 21st Century Leaders Manual*, implores organizations and individuals to achieve their greatest potential—and explains exactly how they can. James has a BA as well as a JD from Harvard College, and attended New College, Oxford University.

FESTIVAL TEAM

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SPEAKER CONCIERGE	Kip Bennett
REGISTRATION / VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR	Wendy Needels
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GUEST RELATIONS/ STAGE DESIGN	Hendler Design | Joel Hendler
ILLUSTRATION	Craig Frazier
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AUTHOR ONLY DINNER CHEF	Bryan Jones Catering
YOUNG READERS PROGRAM	Lorna Sheridan
STUDENTS DAY EVENT COORDINATION	Lorna Sheridan | Lead Wendy Swanson and Kathleen Murphy-Sickert | Coordinators
AUTHORS ON THE PLAZA EVENT COORDINATION	Alan Rellaford Lorna Sheridan

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our deepest thanks to the many friends who offered their time, expertise, and good spirits to volunteer and make the Festival a success. Without them, the Festival would not be a reality.

FESTIVAL VOLUNTEERS

Ellen Anderson
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Stephanir Teleki
Linda Tiefenthal
Maggie Tracey
Eileen Tyson

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS (CONTINUED)

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Deirdre Kidder
Judy Kirkpatrick
Babs Lowe
Richard Neill
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Peggy Sebera
Raye Lynn Thomas
Cindy Troianello
Ruth Uribes

DAY OF TEAM

Blair Hunt
Jessica Jasso
Liz Jenks
Anthony Lee
Barry Sheridan
Nina Sheridan
Ruth Uribes

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David and Ginny, with gratitude, thank our Board of Directors - for their vision, leadership and belief in what's possible.

Rafel Costas
Sandra Gale
Mark Hagopian
Jeremy Sugerman

STUDENTS DAY

JACQUELINE KENNEDY

"There are many little ways to enlarge your world. Love of books is the best of all."

DR. SEUSS

"You can find magic wherever you look. Sit back and relax, all you need is a book!"

MARY SCHMICH

"Reading is a discount ticket to everywhere."

ABOUT STUDENTS DAY

Since the first year of the Festival, co-founders Ginny and David Freeman's vision has included introducing Sonoma Valley students to the power of the written word and the extraordinary impact of new ideas through engaging with today's top speakers and thought leaders. Horizons open, imaginations awaken, minds expand and dreams are born. That is the magic of the Sonoma Valley Authors Festival Students Day.

In a time when students' eyes are increasingly drawn toward screens for information and even affirmation, books open a reader's mind to a new world of possibility and provide a gateway to explore new ideas, cultures and experiences.

The first annual Students Day was held on May 4, 2018, when select authors and visionaries in science, technology and medicine spoke with 2,700 middle and high school students. Almost 3,000 books written by the presenting authors were given free to the students, all paid for with private donations.

Since that day, the Sonoma Valley Authors Festival has hosted Students Day at Sonoma Valley High School with approximately 1,000-5,000 books written by the presenting authors given away each year, for a total of 20,000 books to date, all paid for with private funds. The only exception was 2020, due to COVID.

This year, Students Day will be held on Friday, May 1, at Sonoma Valley High School. Bestselling author Bryan Burrough, famed graphic designer Craig Frazier, acclaimed astrophysicist Alex Filippenko, award-winning sports reporter Michelle Kaufman, motivational speaker J.R. Martinez, AI entrepreneur James Wang, and tech executive turned farmer Shalie Jonker, will speak to students.

The Vadasz Family Foundation is the presenting sponsor for Students Day.

STUDENTS DAY 2026

STUDENTS DAY AUTHORS & SPEAKERS



BRYAN BURROUGH



ALEX FILIPPENKO



CRAIG FRAZIER



JEANNE WALKER HARVEY



SHALIE JONKER



MICHELLE KAUFMAN



J.R. MARTINEZ



JAMES WANG

STUDENTS DAY PARTNER

SONOMA VALLEY MENTORING ALLIANCE

The Sonoma Valley Mentoring Alliance is the go-to-agency for youth in need of social and emotional support or those facing family or cultural barriers to success. Since 1996, the Mentoring Alliance has helped school children by pairing them with caring adult mentors who make a big difference in their lives.

SVAF YOUNG READERS PROGRAM

In just two short years since the launch of its Young Readers Program, SVAF has provided more than 2,000 young students in grades K-3 at nine different elementary schools with in-school presentations from award-winning children's book author Jeanne Walker Harvey. More than 3,000 children's books written by Harvey and other authors were given to K-5 students by SVAF in 2024/2025, all paid for with private funds.

SVAF BRINGS READ ON SONOMA TO THE VALLEY

In 2026, SVAF is thrilled to announce that it has partnered with the Read On Sonoma literacy initiative to make a major, target and concerted effort to move the needle on youth literacy in Sonoma Valley. Ginny and David Freeman announced earlier this spring that SVAF's Young Readers Program has provided the funding to make the Read On Sonoma initiative available to every student in grades 2 through 5 at all three Sonoma Valley elementary schools.

Learn more at readonsonoma.org.



FESTIVAL SPONSORS



FRAN LEBOWITZ

"Think before you speak.
Read before you think."

JOHN STEINBECK

"I guess there are
never enough books."

HENRY WARD BEECHER

"Books are not made for furniture,
but there is nothing else that so
beautifully furnishes a house."

Sonoma Valley Authors Festival

In just eight years, we have been thrilled to see the impact the Sonoma Valley Authors Festival has made in the Sonoma Community.

AUTHORS FESTIVAL

200 world class authors and speakers
have discussed a variety of topics and various disciplines

2,750 attendees have participated

STUDENTS DAY

14,300 students
have explored new ideas in person with our award-winning writers and thought leaders

21,000 books
written by the presenting authors have been given to students, all paid for with private funds

AUTHORS ON THE PLAZA

5,200 North Bay Citizens
have participated in Authors on the Plaza, our free, family-friendly, community event on the historic Sonoma town square.

4,600 books have been given free to the attendees

VIRTUAL FESTIVAL

7,500 individuals worldwide attended

100+ online presentations included

None of this would have been possible without the generous support of our sponsors and donors. As a **501(c)(3) non-profit organization**, we could not bring you the annual Sonoma Valley Authors Festival, Students Day, Authors on the Plaza, and the Virtual Festival without your contributions. Thank you!

We would be honored to have your help in bringing the 9th Sonoma Valley Authors Festival to Sonoma! There are several ways for you to contribute.

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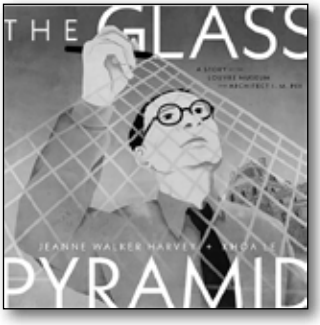
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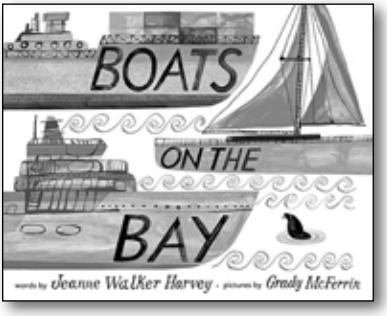
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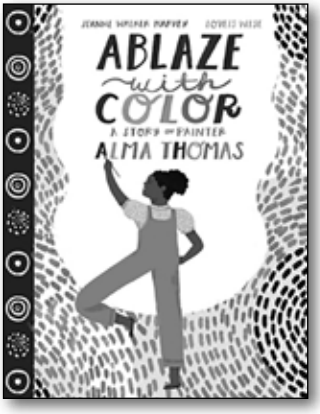
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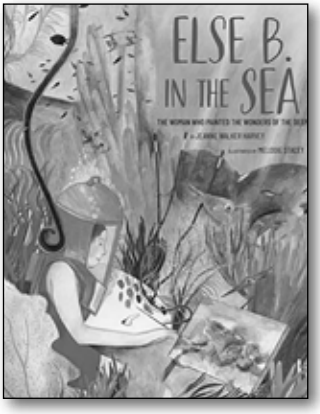
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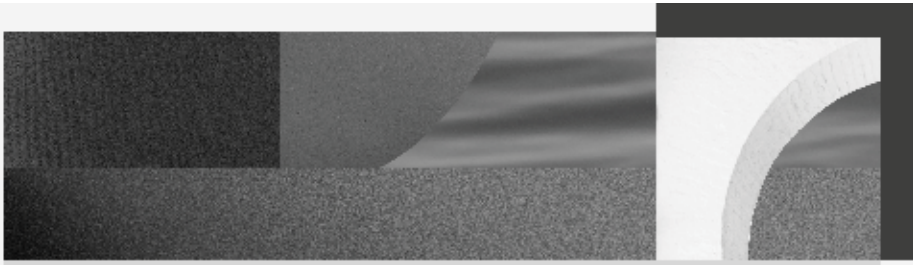
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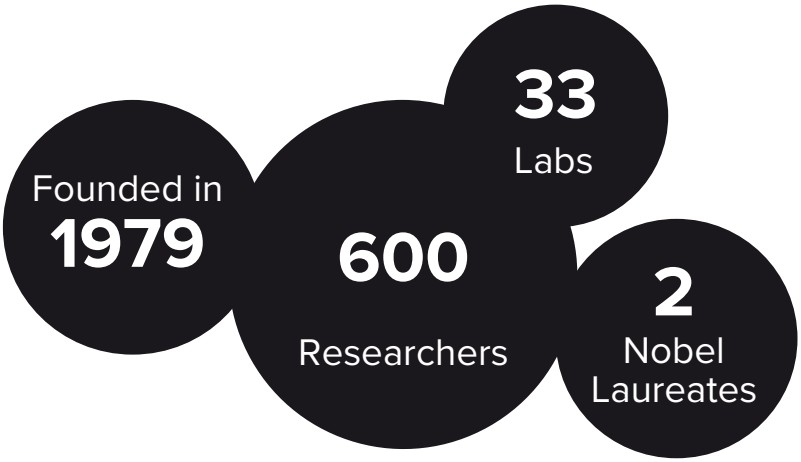


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A NEW CHAPTER FOR SONOMA VALLEY STUDENTS

Read On Sonoma is working with the Sonoma Valley Unified School District to bring its proven, high-impact literacy program to grades 2-5.

Across Sonoma County, students in Read On Sonoma schools are reading **3-7x the national average**, with many becoming proud "million-word readers."

This is more than a program - it's a movement that transforms how students see themselves. We are honored to expand it to the Sonoma Valley public schools.

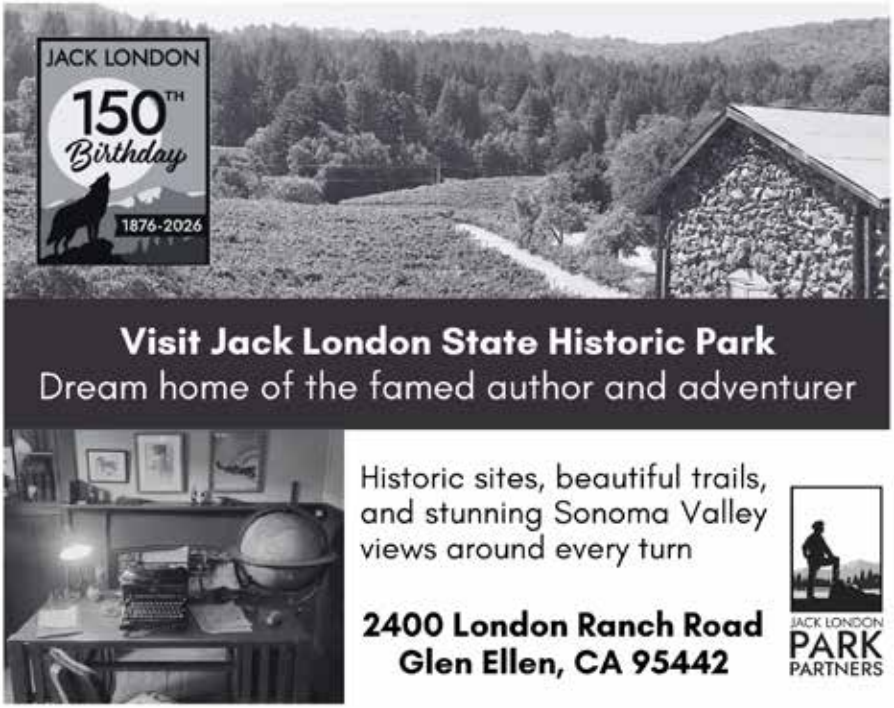
Read On Sonoma thanks the Sonoma Valley Authors Festival Young Readers Program for providing 100% of the funding needed to bring Read On Sonoma to all three Sonoma Valley elementary schools.

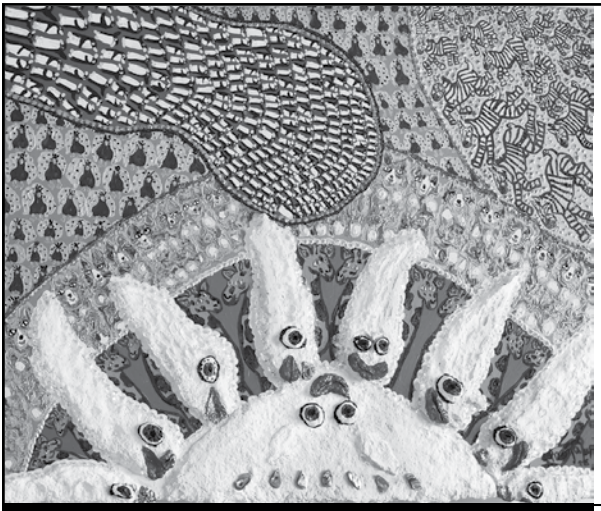
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Maija Peeples-Bright, *Beast Sunburst entHAREs the Sky*, 2025

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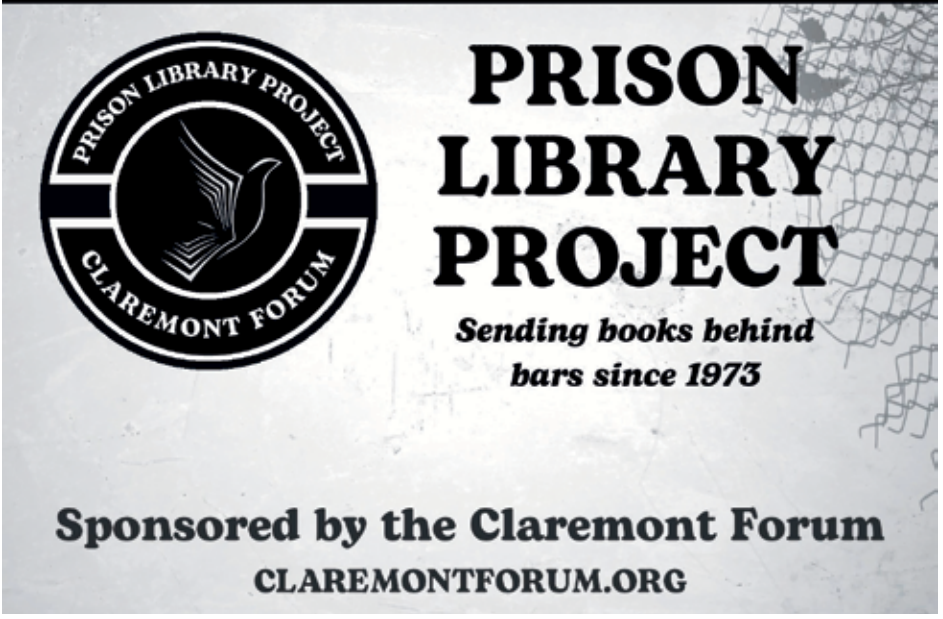
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← MAP OF FESTIVAL EVENT VENUES



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