

2026

WASHINGTON



Writers
Conference

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to publication*



Washington Writers
CONFERENCE



Writing Retreats

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2026 Summer and Fall

July 16-21: Novel Writing
w/ Tammy Greenwood

Sept. 20-25: Inspired Writing
w/ Eugenia Kim

Oct. 12-16: Poetry and Yoga
w/ Ann Quinn

2027 Winter

Jan. 13-18: Creative Writing
w/ Diana Friedman

Feb. 4-7: Cozy Book Club Retreat
w/ Old Town Books

Feb. 24-28: You Write, We Cook,
Writer's Getaway

www.zigbonefarmretreat.com/retreats

PowerWriters

DC MD NoVA

PowerWriters is a community of **fiction writers** of all genres in the Washington DC area who support each other with feedback and accountability.

Join an **accountability group** for productivity or a **critique group** for feedback. Groups form 3 times a year.

Learn more at
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Application Deadlines

SUMMER April 30*

FALL August 31

SPRING December 31

*Deadline extended to
May 3 for attendees of
2026 Washington Writers
Conference





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Writers Groups

The writing life doesn't need to be solitary. Keep the networking going! Join up with other writers and form groups based around your interests and genres. We do the matchmaking, and the rest is up to you. Scan the QR code on the left to sign up.



Survey

Help us make the conference the best it can be! Please fill out our survey. You can fill out the paper survey in your folder or scan the QR code on the left for our online survey.

Wi-Fi

MarriottBonvoy_Conference - Password: PitchWWC2026

Save the Date!

The 2027 Washington Writers Conference will be April 30 – May 1, 2027, at the Bethesda Hyatt. Registration begins Fall 2026.

Use Code WWC2026 for a 10% discount!



Schedule at a Glance

Agent pitches are ongoing from 9-11:50 a.m. and 1:45-4:50 p.m. in Brookside A/B (Downstairs) on May 2.

<i>Friday, May 1</i>		
5:30 p.m.	Check-in/registration opens	Registration Desk (downstairs)
6:30-7:30 p.m.	Reception/cash bar	Salon A/B/C (upstairs)
7:30-9:00 p.m.	How to Pitch an Agent	Salon A/B/C (upstairs)
<i>Saturday, May 2</i>		
7:30 a.m.	Check-in/registration opens	Registration Desk (downstairs)
8:00-9:00 a.m.	Breakfast/coffee	Salon A/B/C (upstairs)
8:30-8:50 a.m.	Welcome & Housekeeping Jenny Yacovissi, WIRoB president Stephanie Diaz, conference chair Kathleen Benson, Gaithersburg Book Festival	Salon A/B/C (upstairs)
9:00-9:50 a.m.	Debut Authors: How They Did It	Salon A/B/C (upstairs)
	How to Organize a Short Collection	Brookside C (downstairs)
10:00-10:50 a.m.	From Journalist to Author	Salon A/B/C (upstairs)
	Workshop: Book Marketing on a Budget	Brookside C (downstairs)
11:00-11:50 a.m.	Writing in Washington	Salon A/B/C (upstairs)
	The Business of Poetry	Brookside C (downstairs)



Saturday, May 2 (continued)		
12:00-1:30 p.m.	Lunch Lifetime Achievement Award: Richard Peabody, introduced by Rose Solari Keynote: Margot Lee Shetterly and Aran Shetterly, moderated by Eric Dezenhall	Salon A/B/C (upstairs)
2:00-2:50 p.m.	What Booksellers Know	Salon A/B/C (upstairs)
	Plot Secrets from the Pros	Brookside C (downstairs)
3:00-3:50 p.m.	Your Story, Your Way	Salon A/B/C (upstairs)
	Writing for Young Readers	Brookside C (downstairs)
4:00-4:50 p.m.	Beyond the Big Houses: Self-Publishing and Independent Press Publishing	Salon A/B/C (upstairs)
	Workshop: How to Get Noticed: An Editor and Agent Shares Tricks of the Trade	Brookside C (downstairs)



The bookstore will be open May 2nd from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. outside of Salon A/B/C (upstairs).

Please stop by to support this local bookstore and our authors! Book signings will follow panels.



Panels and Workshops

PANELS

Debut Authors: How They Did It

This popular panel gives debut authors a chance to share their publication stories. The first novel by NYT-bestselling ghostwriter Samuel Ashworth, *The Life and Death of August Sweeney*, is about a legendary chef who controls the story of his life by manipulating the doctor conducting his autopsy. Lacey N. Dunham's debut novel, *The Belles*, explores the dark dynamics of an outsider trying to break into the elite clique of an exclusive college in 1951. Marisa Kashino's satiric thriller *Best Offer Wins* — about the competitive DC real-estate market — is a Good Morning America Book Club pick and is in development as a TV series for Hulu. And in writer, editor, and teacher Hannah Grieco's first story collection, *First Kicking, Then Not*, women struggle to see themselves outside of the roles they're expected to play. Amy Freeman, development director at the Writer's Center, writer, will moderate.

The Business of Poetry

Learn how successful poets have built and sustained their careers. Social-justice activist Sunu P. Chandy is a poet and a civil rights attorney whose award-winning collection, *My Dear Comrades*, was published by Regal House in 2023. Dwayne Lawson-Brown, aka the Crochet Kingpin, works for the DC Arts Commission and is the author of four poetry collections, the latest of which is *Biscuit Box*. *Peacocks on the Streets* is Michele Wolf's most recent book; the prize-winning poet also teaches at the Writer's Center. Moderating the panel is Jona Colson, co-president of Washington Writers' Publishing House and a poet, translator, editor, publisher, and professor. He has authored *Said Through Glass* and translated *Aguas/Waters* by Miguel Averó.

Plot Secrets from the Pros

These prolific writers describe how they plot their stories. Moderating the discussion is E.A. Aymar, whose latest Anthony Award-nominated novel is *When She Left*. He is a former member of the national board of the International Thriller Writers and is an active member of Crime Writers of Color and Sisters in Crime. With a career of over 30 years in intelligence work, Alma Katsu has won numerous awards for her many historical horror and spy novels; in her most recent work, *Fiend*, a thousand-year-old demon terrorizes the modern world. The author of 14 books, including *Van Boyle*, *A Fly in the Ointment*, *Sibs*, and *The Tall Tale of Tommy Twice*, Nathan Leslie is also the series editor for *Best Small Fictions* and editor of the Maryland Literary Review. And Eliza Nellums is the author of two novels, *The Bone Cay* and *All That's Bright and Gone*, praised in the Washington Post and Real Simple magazine.

Writing for Young Readers (Children, MG, & YA)

DC native and nonprofit executive Antoine Lunsford draws inspiration from his 16 years of classroom experience to create the children's books in his *Little Andy's World* series. Brandt Ricca's Louisiana heritage provides the setting for his two middle-grade series, including three books about young Barris Hart. His third and latest Bernice story, *Bernice and the Broken Dream*, was just released. Among Bethany C. Morrow's many other honors, her novel *So Many Beginnings*, a *Little Women* remix, was showcased at the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Her latest fiction is an adult horror story, *The Body*. Moderating the panel is Anna Bright, who, in addition to her work at an independent bookstore, has published four YA novels, most recently *The Hedgewitch of Foxhall*.



What Booksellers Know

We often hear from editors, agents, and publishers, but who better than booksellers to talk to us about placement, marketing, and even genre decisions? After nearly three decades as an award-winning journalist at the Washington Post, Amy Joyce co-founded Wonderland Books, an independent bookstore in Bethesda, Maryland. A former elementary school teacher and reading coach, Megan Bormet is the owner of community-oriented People's Book in Takoma Park, Maryland. Susan Coll has worked at Politics and Prose for 10 years and currently serves as its events advisor. She is the author of *Bookish People*, *The Literati*, *Real Life and Other Fictions*, and multiple other novels. Patricia Coral moderates this discussion. Her memoir, *Women Surrounded by Water*, was longlisted for the 2024 National Book Critics Circle Award in Autobiography, and she previously served as events director for Politics and Prose Bookstore.

Your Story, Your Way

You have a story to tell, your own or one that's been in your family for years, but how should you tell it: via memoir, fiction, nonfiction, or a hybrid? Moderator Laura J. Oliver is an award-winning writer, developmental story editor, workshop facilitator, writing mentor, and author of *The Story Within*, *New Insights and Inspiration for Writers*. A'Lelia Bundles has authored the first major biography of her great-grandmother, *Joy Goddess: A'Lelia Walker and the Harlem Renaissance*, as well as *On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker*, about her entrepreneurial great-great-grandmother. Jeannie Vanasco has written three acclaimed memoirs, *A Silent Treatment*, *Things We Didn't Talk About When I Was a Girl*, and *The Glass Eye*; her new book is forthcoming from Tin House. Jennifer Bort Yacovissi, president of the Independent, is the author of *Up the Hill to Home*, a fictionalized account of her mother's family in Washington, DC, between the Civil War and the Great

Writing in Washington

Celebrating the positive aspects of being a writer in the DMV, our panelists look at the region's unique opportunities and resources. Leading this discussion is moderator Stefan Fatsis, a journalist and sports commentator, as well as the author of *Unabridged: The Thrill of (and Threat to) the Modern Dictionary* and three other books. Richard Peabody is founding editor of Gargoyle Magazine/Paycock Press, a teacher, and the author of a novella, three short-story collections, a volume of poetry, and other works. A Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist now retired from the Miami Herald, Leonard Pitts Jr., has published multiple novels, the most recent of which are *54 Miles* and *The Last Thing You Surrender*. Dr. Colleen J. Shogan, a member of the Independent's board of directors, served as the 11th Archivist of the United States and, "in her spare time," has penned eight mystery novels in her award-winning *Washington Whodunit* series, which features amateur sleuth Kit Marshall.

How to Organize a Collection of Short Fiction or Poetry

Writer and teacher Chloe Yelena Miller, whose second volume of poetry, *Perforated*, was just released, moderates this panel of experts as they share insights and practical tips for arranging separate components into a creative whole. The author of *a more perfect Union* and *Haint*, Teri Ellen Cross Davis curated the poetry series at the Folger Shakespeare Library for almost 20 years. Hiram Larew's seventh collection of poems, *This Much Very*, was published by Alien Buddha Press in 2025, and the prize-winning poet also founded Poetry X Hunger, an initiative that supports the anti-hunger cause. Zach Powers is executive and artistic director for the Writer's Center and Poet Lore magazine. In addition to his story collection, *Gravity Changes*, he has published two novels, most recently *The Migraine Diaries*.



Beyond the Big Houses: Self-Publishing and Independent Press Publishing

Self-publishing and placing your book with an independent press are increasingly popular ways to make your voice heard. Moderating this panel is Independent columnist Ellen Prentiss Campbell, author of the acclaimed historical novels *Frieda's Song*, *The Bowl with Gold Seams*, and the just-published *Vanishing Point*, as well as two short-story collections. Following a radio career that included a stint as co-programmer of Sirius XM Book Radio, Kim Alexander turned to writing fantasy romance. Her first novel, *The Sand Prince*, launched a series called *The Demon Door*. As owner of POP Editorial Services, LLC, Katherine Pickett offers coaching and editing services and has won awards for her *Perfect Bound: How to Navigate the Book Publishing Process Like a Pro*. She self-published her 2025 novel, *Debra Lee Won't Break*. An expert on maritime history, Ken Rossignol travels worldwide to speak on a variety of related topics and has self-published numerous books on subjects ranging from the Chesapeake Bay to the Panama Canal to the heroes of the *Titanic*.

From Journalist to Author

Learn how these writers built on their journalistic talents to publish nonfiction books. Moderator Cathy Alter, a member of the Independent's board of directors, has written articles and essays for *O*, the *Oprah Magazine*, the *Cut*, *WIRED*, and the *Washington Post*, among others. She is the author of *Virgin Territory*, the memoir *Up for Renewal*, and *CRUSH*. Melanie D.G. Kaplan is a longtime independent journalist with a focus on travel and science writing; her first book, *Lab Dog*, was released by Seal Press in October. Journalist, author, and climate activist Mike Tidwell has published seven books, the most recent of which is *The Lost Trees of Willow Avenue: A Story of Climate and Hope on One American Street*, an exploration of global warming's impact. Vicki Valosik has written for such national publications as the *Atlantic*, *Smithsonian*, *Slate*, *U.S. News & World Report*, the *Huffington Post*, the *Washington Post Magazine*, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Her book *Swimming Pretty: The Untold Story of Women in Water* was published by Liveright, a W.W. Norton imprint.

WORKSHOPS

Book Marketing on a Budget

In this workshop, Rob Jolles will offer practical, budget-friendly book-marketing strategies, from building a book launch to leveraging social media, blogs, podcasts, Amazon tools, press releases, and more. By the end of the program, he promises you'll walk away with a personalized, actionable marketing plan and the confidence to promote your book like a pro. A five-time bestselling author and 40-year professional speaker, Rob has delivered workshops and publicized his books all over the world. He trains authors to promote their books and speaks for some of the largest publishers in the country.

Get Noticed: An Agent and Editor Shares Tricks of the Trade

Literary agent Barbara Jones addresses the two manuscript obstacles to having your work picked up by an agent and by an acquiring editor — and how to remove them. At Stuart Krichevsky Literary Agency, she represents literary and upmarket fiction, as well as nonfiction. For many years, she worked as an editor at such magazines as *Real Simple* and *Vogue* before moving into books. She was also a onetime editorial director at Hyperion and an executive editor at Henry Holt.



Panelists and Speakers

Kim Alexander grew up in the wilds of Long Island, NY, and slowly drifted south until she reached Key West. After spending 10 years working as a disc jockey in the Keys, she moved to Washington, DC, where she reported the traffic and spun the oldies. After a career upgrade, she became the co-programmer of SiriusXM Book Radio, which gave her the opportunity to interview some of her writing heroes, including Anne Rice, George R.R. Martin, Stephen King, and Margaret Atwood, among many hundreds of others. Kim is the author of the epic fantasy *Demon Door* series and the paranormal romance *New World Magic* series. She currently writes full time and lives with two cats, an angry fish, and her extremely patient husband close enough to the National Zoo to hear the lions and the monkeys (at least, she hopes that's what those noises are). Find her on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

Cathy Alter's articles and essays have appeared in O, the Oprah Magazine, the Cut, WIRED, Oldster, Narratively, and the Washington Post, among others. She is the author of *Virgin Territory: Stories From the Road to Womanhood*, the memoir *Up for Renewal: What Magazines Taught Me About Love, Sex, and Starting Over*, and *CRUSH: Writers Reflect on Love, Longing, and the Lasting Power of Their First Celebrity Crush*. She lives in Washington, DC, with her husband, Karl, and their son, Leo. Find her on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and on X at @CathyAlter.

Samuel Ashworth is the author of *The Death and Life of August Sweeney*, described by the Washington Post as a debut that “deserves to be savored.” He writes for the Atlantic, the Washington Post, Eater, Longreads, and others. He is a professor of creative writing at George Washington University and a New York Times bestselling ghostwriter. He lives in Washington, DC, with his wife and two sons. Find him at @samuel.b.ashworth on Instagram and @samuelashworth on Bluesky and Twitter.

E.A. Aymar, an Anthony Award nominee, is the author of multiple thrillers. Says Booklist of his most recent novel, *When She Left*, “This would appeal to fans of Elmore Leonard...with high-stakes violence tempered by humor and disarmingly sympathetic antiheroes.” In 2025, *When She Left* was chosen by PEN/Faulkner as one of three books for their prestigious DC Reads program. His previous thriller, *No Home for Killers*, received praise from the New York Times, Kirkus, and the South Florida Sun-Sentinel, and it was an instant Amazon Bestseller. A frequent contributor to the Washington Post and a past columnist for the Independent, Aymar is a former member of the national board of the International Thriller Writers and is an active member of Crime Writers of Color and Sisters in Crime. He was born in Panama and now lives and writes in the DC/MD/VA triangle. Find him on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Bluesky](#).

Megan Bormet is the owner of People's Book in Takoma Park, Maryland. Bormet, a mom of three young children and a former educator, moved with her family to Takoma Park in 2020. If you knew her in her elementary-teaching days, you'd know that she's always had a passion for finding the right book for the right kid at the right time. For years, she dreamed of opening her own bookstore, and she's excited to create and nurture a welcoming space for neighbors to come together to learn and grow. Megan's education experience has given her a vast knowledge of literature, and she is excited to curate a diverse selection of books for her community.

Anna Bright is the author of YA novels *The Hedgewitch of Foxhall*, *The Song That Moves the Sun*, *The Beholder*, and *The Boundless*. When not writing, she loves concerts, rollercoasters, and



adventures at home and abroad. Anna lives with her family in a charming corner of Washington, DC, but you can find her online on [Instagram](#).

A'Leia Bundles is the author of *Joy Goddess: A'Leia Walker and the Harlem Renaissance*, the first major biography of her great-grandmother, and of *On Her Own Ground: The Life and Times of Madam C.J. Walker*, a New York Times Notable Book about her entrepreneurial great-great-grandmother. She is a former ABC News executive, Emmy Award-winning NBC News producer, founder of the Madam Walker Family Archives, and a member of several nonprofit boards, including Harvard's Schlesinger Library.

Ellen Prentiss Campbell is the author of three novels and two short-story collections. Her novel *The Bowl with Gold Seams* received the Indy Excellence Award for Historical Fiction, and her collection of short stories *Contents Under Pressure* was nominated for the National Book Award. The author grew up in Pennsylvania and Maryland, telling stories before she could read. She studied at Smith College and the Bennington Writing Seminars. As a psychotherapist, she listened to stories. Now she writes in Washington, DC, and Bedford County, Pennsylvania. Find her on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Goodreads](#), and [Bluesky](#).

Sunu P. Chandy (she/her) is a social-justice activist including through her work as a poet and a civil rights attorney. She is the daughter of immigrants from Kerala, India, and currently lives in DC with her family. Her award-winning collection of poems, *My Dear Comrades*, was published by Regal House and features cover art by [Ragni Agarwal](#). Sunu is currently [a senior advisor with Democracy Forward](#) and is on the board of the [Transgender Law Center](#). Sunu has been included as one of the Washington Blade's [Queer Women of Washington](#).

Susan Coll is the bestselling author of eight novels, including *The Literati*, *Real Life and Other Fictions*, *Bookish People*, and *The Stager*, a New York Times and Chicago Tribune Editor's Choice. Her novel *Acceptance* was made into a TV movie starring Joan Cusack. Her work has appeared in numerous publications, including the New York Times Book Review and the Washington Post. She has worked at Politics and Prose for more than 10 years and is currently its events advisor.

Jona Colson is a poet, educator, and translator. He is the author of *Said Through Glass* (Washington Writers' Publishing House), translator of *Agua/Waters* by Miguel Averó, and co-editor of two anthologies, including *America's Future: Poetry and Prose in Response to Tomorrow* (2025). His poems and interviews have appeared in *Ploughshares*, the *Southern Review*, *LitHub*, and elsewhere. He is co-president of Washington Writers' Publishing House and edits the bi-weekly journal *WWPH Writes*. He is a professor of ESL at Montgomery College and lives in Washington, DC.

Patricia Coral is the author of the memoir *Women Surrounded by Water*, longlisted for the 2024 National Book Critics Circle Award in Autobiography. She holds an MFA in creative writing from American University, where she was editor-in-chief of *FOLIO Literary Journal*. The former director of events for Politics and Prose Bookstore, she has contributed to numerous literary magazines. Her work has been supported by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

Teri Ellen Cross Davis is the author of *a more perfect Union* and *Haint*. Her fellowships and awards include the Journal/Charles B. Wheeler Poetry Prize, the Ohioana Book Award for Poetry, and a Maryland Individual Artist Award. She curated the O.B. Poetry Series at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, for almost 20 years. She will be the Nora Roberts Foundation Writer-in-Residence at Hood College in the spring of 2026.



Eric Dezenhall is the author of 12 books of fiction and nonfiction. His most recent nonfiction book is *Wiseguys and the White House: Gangsters, Presidents and the Deals They Made* (HarperCollins). His book *Glass Jaw: Defending Fragile Reputations in an Age of Instant Scandal* (Twelve) is a popular text for MBA students and others who study crisis management. His nonfiction story *Best of Enemies: The Last Great Spy Story of the Cold War*, co-authored with Gus Russo (Twelve), is being made into a motion picture starring Bradley Cooper and Christian Bale, according to entertainment-industry trade publications.

Lacey N. Dunham is the author of the novels *The Belles*, a Best Book of 2025 by Library Journal and Crime Reads, and the forthcoming *Fall of the House of Graystone* (2027), both from S&S/Atria. Named a 2025 Writer to Watch by Poets & Writers Magazine, she has received support from the Elizabeth George Foundation, the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, and the Sewanee Writers Conference, among others. She lives in Washington, DC, with too many books but only two cats.

Stefan Fatsis is the author of *Unabridged: The Thrill of (and Threat to) the Modern Dictionary*, published in October by Grove Atlantic, and three other books: the New York Times bestseller *Word Freak*, about the world of competitive Scrabble; *A Few Seconds of Panic*, about life in the NFL; and *Wild and Outside*, about minor-league baseball. In four decades as a journalist, Fatsis has written and talked for Slate, the Wall Street Journal, NPR, the New York Times, the Atlantic, ESPN, Sports Illustrated, and many other outlets. He lives in Washington, DC.

Amy Freeman's bylines include the Washington Post, the Offing, AARP, and dozens of other journals and anthologies. By day, she's development director at the Writer's Center, a literary-arts nonprofit based just outside of Washington, DC, in Bethesda, MD.

Hannah Grieco's debut short-story collection, *First Kicking, Then Not*, is out now from Stanchion Books. She teaches writing at Marymount University, works as a private book coach and editor, and writes a literary column for Washington City Paper. Read more of her work in the Washington Post, the Independent, Al Jazeera, Brevity, Wigleaf, Poet Lore, Shenandoah, Fairy Tale Review, and more. Find her on most social media at @writesloud.

Rob Jolles is a five-time bestselling author and a 40-year professional speaker. He has traveled over 3 million miles delivering workshops and promoting his books all over the world. He trains authors to promote their books and speaks for some of the largest publishers in the country. Find him on [LinkedIn](#), the [Presentation Whisperer Show](#), [Pocket Sized Pep Talks](#), [X](#), and [YouTube](#).

Amy Joyce opened Wonderland Books with her friend Gayle Weiswasser in December 2024 after nearly three decades as a journalist at the Washington Post. While there, she was a business reporter and workplace columnist, authored the book *I Went to College for This?*, and was an editor in the features section. Her most beloved role at the Post was as the editor and writer of On Parenting. The Post is also where she met her husband, Steven Ginsberg, executive editor of the Athletic. They have two sons and a beloved dog named Rosie. She could not be happier to be spending her life surrounded by great writers and their books.

Melanie D.G. Kaplan is a longtime independent journalist whose travel and science writing has appeared in the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, and National Parks magazine. She is a graduate of Columbia Journalism School, a 2021-2022 MIT Knight Science Journalism fellow, and a third-generation Washington, DC, native. Her book, *Lab Dog: A Beagle and His Human Investigate*



the Surprising World of Animal Research, was published by Seal Press in October. Kaplan has lived most of her life with hounds. Find her on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), and [Bluesky](#). (And find her dog, Hammy, on [Instagram](#), too.)

Marisa Kashino is the author of the debut novel *Best Offer Wins*, a Good Morning America Book Club pick, also in development as a TV series for Hulu. Kashino was previously a journalist, most recently at the Washington Post. She spent the bulk of her career at Washingtonian magazine, writing long-form features and overseeing the real-estate and home-design coverage. She grew up near Seattle, graduating from the University of Washington with a degree in journalism and political science, and now lives in the DC area with her husband, two dogs, and two cats.

Alma Katsu is the New York Times-bestselling author of nine novels, including *The Hunger* (“supernatural suspense at its finest”) and, most recently, *Fiend*, which has been optioned for television. Her books have won or been nominated for the Stoker, Locus, Goodreads, and Shirley Jackson awards and made best-books lists at NPR, Library Journal, Oprah, Barnes & Noble, Amazon, and elsewhere. Find her on [Substack](#), [Instagram](#), and [Bluesky](#).

Hiram Larew’s seventh collection of poems, *This Much Very*, was published by Alien Buddha Press in 2025. His poems appear in Poetry South, Iowa Review, Poetry Scotland, and Contemporary American Voices and have been nominated for Pushcart and Best of the Net awards. He also founded Poetry X Hunger, an initiative that brings a world of poets to the anti-hunger cause. Larew is a Courtesy Faculty at five U. S. universities. His other collections include *Mud Ajar* (2021) and *Patchy Ways* (2023).

Dwayne Lawson-Brown, aka the Crochet Kingpin, is the former co-host of Spit Dat, the longest-running open-mic in Washington, DC. They are the author of four poetry collections, *One Color Kaleidoscope* (2019), *Twenty:21* (2021), *Breaking the Blank* (Day Eight, co-authored with Rebecca Bishophall, 2022), and *Biscuit Box* (2025). With their writing partner, Drew Anderson, Dwayne has co-authored three plays, “From Gumbo to Mumbo” (2018), “Push the Button” (2022), and the forthcoming “Midiculous” (2025).

Nathan Leslie won the 2019 Washington Writers’ Publishing House prize for fiction for his satirical collection of short stories, *Hurry Up and Relax*. He is also the series editor for *Best Small Fictions* and the editor of the Maryland Literary Review. He is the author of 14 books, including *Van Boyle*, *A Fly in the Ointment*, *Sibs*, and *The Tall Tale of Tommy Twice*. He is also the author of a collection of poems, *Night Sweat*. His fiction has been published in hundreds of literary magazines such as Shenandoah, North American Review, Boulevard, Hotel Amerika, South Dakota Review, Lake Effect, and Cimarron Review. Nathan’s nonfiction has been published in the Washington Post, Kansas City Star, and Orlando Sentinel. Nathan lives in Northern Virginia.

Antoine Lunsford is a native of Washington, DC. He graduated from Bowie State University in 2010 with a bachelor’s in education. He’s been a classroom teacher for 16 years now. In 2017, he released his first of three children’s books in his Little Andy’s World book series. He’s traveled around the DC Metro area visiting schools as a motivational speaker in addition to his book tours as an author. Antoine is also CEO of a local nonprofit, the Lunsford-Williams Foundation, and a financial-services professional. He and his family reside in Anne Arundel County.

Chloe Yelena Miller is a writer and teacher living in Washington, DC, with her partner and child. She’s the author of *Perforated* (2026) and *Viable* (2021), both out from Lily Poetry Review Books).



She and Shasta Grant co-founded and co-direct Brown Bag Lit, an online writing community. She also teaches writing and literature through the University of Maryland's Global Campus, Politics and Prose bookstore, and New Directions in Writing, as well as privately. Miller has a B.A. in Italian language and literature from Smith College (1998) and an MFA in poetry from Sarah Lawrence College (2003). Find her on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Bluesky](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

Bethany C. Morrow writes bestselling adult and young-adult novels. Her YA work includes SLJ Gold Standard selections *A Song Below Water* (a Locus, Ignite, and Audie finalist) and *So Many Beginnings*, the latter a *Little Women* remix for which she's presented at the National Museum of African American History and Culture. She is editor/contributor to the YA anthology *Take the Mic*, which won the 2020 ILA Social Justice in Literature award. Her adult novels include *Mem*, an Indies Introduce and Indie Next pick, *Cherish Farrah*, a social horror (and the April 2022 Belletrist x Bookclub pick), and, most recently, *The Body*. She was the 2021 Mansfield Lecturer at Roosevelt University, and her work has been featured in the Los Angeles Times, Forbes, Bustle, BuzzFeed, and elsewhere. Bethany is also included on USA TODAY's list of 100 Black novelists and fiction writers you should read. Find her on [Instagram](#), [Threads](#), [Substack](#), and [Bluesky](#).

Eliza Nellums was raised in the Detroit suburbs and now lives with two cats outside Washington, DC. Her first novel, *All That's Bright and Gone*, was named an Amazon Editor's Pick and was praised in the Washington Post and Real Simple magazine. Bestselling author Lisa Gardner called Nellums' second novel, *The Bone Cay*, "atmospheric and gripping." Nellums is a member of the Metro Wriders, a weekly critique group that meets in Dupont Circle. An amateur botanist and avid gardener, she divides her time among plants, books, and cats.

Laura J. Oliver, MFA, is an award-winning writer, developmental story editor, workshop facilitator, and writing mentor. She is the author of *The Story Within, New Insights and Inspiration for Writers* (Penguin Random House). Her fiction and nonfiction appear in national magazines, newspapers and literary reviews, including the Washington Post, the Writer, Country Living, the Sun Magazine, Delmarva Review, Baltimore Review, and Glimmer Train. She taught at the University of Maryland and St. John's College, and her popular weekly newspaper column is featured every Wednesday on NPR's Morning Edition as "This is How the Story Goes." Oliver has won a Maryland State Arts Council Individual Artist Award in Fiction and an Anne Arundel County Literary Arts Award.

Katherine Pickett is the owner of POP Editorial Services LLC, where she offers coaching and editing services. She is the author of the award-winning guide *Perfect Bound: How to Navigate the Book Publishing Process Like a Pro* and the novel *Debra Lee Won't Break*. Her creative works have appeared in *Lowestoft Chronicle*, *Voice of Eve*, *Defunct Magazine*, and *Grand Dame Literary*. Her industry articles have appeared on *Publishing Perspectives*, *JaneFriedman.com*, *Writer Beware*, *IBPA Independent*, and elsewhere. She lives in Silver Spring, Maryland, with her handsome and strong husband, Chris, and their two awe-inspiring daughters. Find her blog at www.thePOPnewsletter.com. Also find her on [LinkedIn](#), [Mastodon](#), and [here](#).

Leonard Pitts Jr. is a retired columnist for the Miami Herald. His twice-weekly column, syndicated nationally to more than 200 newspapers, was one of the most popular in the country and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Commentary. Pitts has been writing professionally since 1976, when, as an 18-year-old junior at the University of Southern California, he began doing reviews and profiles for SOUL, a national Black-entertainment tabloid. Two years later, he was its editor. In the years since, Pitts' work has appeared in such publications as TV Guide, Reader's Digest, and Parenting. In



addition, he wrote, produced, and syndicated “Who We Are,” an award-winning 1988 radio documentary on the history of Black America. Pitts’ work has been honored by the American Association of Sunday and Feature Editors, the Society of Professional Journalists, the National Association of Black Journalists, and the National Society of Newspaper Columnists, among many others. Pitts is the author of the novels *54 Miles*, *Before I Forget*, *Freeman*, *Grant Park*, and *The Last Thing You Surrender*. Born and raised in Southern California, he makes his home with his family in Bowie, MD.

Zach Powers is the author of the novel *The Migraine Diaries* (JackLeg, 2026), the novel *First Cosmic Velocity*, and the story collection *Gravity Changes*, winner of the BOA Short Fiction Prize. His writing has been featured in *American Short Fiction*, LitHub, and elsewhere. He serves as executive & artistic director for the Writer’s Center and Poet Lore magazine, America’s oldest poetry journal. Originally from Savannah, Georgia, he now lives in Arlington, Virginia. Find him on [Instagram](#).

Brandt Ricca is a DC-based entrepreneur. Having a writing background and a family history of owning a newspaper, he has always put telling stories at the forefront of his mind. Creating a narrative is a must for Brandt, who always wants to convey a message with events or imagery through his branding agency, Nora Lee by Brandt Ricca. Brandt was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and loves the Southern culture and creative atmosphere of New Orleans, which inspired the setting and vibes for his books, *Barris and the Prince of Rappa*, *Barris and the Clown of Trell*, *Barris and the Girl of Norizon*, *Bernice and the Wonder of Pearl*, *Bernice and the Shadow Witch*, and *Bernice and the Broken Dream*. Find him on social media at @brandtricca and @barrisandbernicebooks.

Ken Rossignol, an author, publisher, and newspaper publisher, has appeared on dozens of ships in the Pacific, Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Caribbean discussing the Panama Canal, the heroes of the *Titanic*, the explorations of New World voyagers, the Bermuda Triangle, and piracy, among other maritime-history topics. Rossignol was a member of the United States Delegation of Authors for the International Book Fair in 2016 to celebrate the opening of the third set of locks of the Panama Canal. Rossignol’s landmark First Amendment decision, Fourth Circuit USCOA 2003 *Rossignol v Voorhaar*, was an important ruling protecting the constitutional rights of readers to decide what to read and of publishers to publish articles critical of public officials.

Colleen J. Shogan served as the 11th Archivist of the United States, the first woman in American history to lead the National Archives and Records Administration. Prior to becoming Archivist, she was senior vice president and director of the David M. Rubenstein Center at the White House Historical Association, worked in the United States Senate, and served as a senior executive at the Library of Congress. Colleen is a senior advisor at the nonpartisan organization More Perfect, which is working to launch a nationwide history-based civics initiative involving three former presidents, three former first ladies, and seven Pulitzer Prize winners. She currently serves as the co-chair of the board of directors at the Women’s Suffrage National Monument Foundation, the entity directed by Congress to build the first monument dedicated to women’s history on the National Mall. In her spare time, Colleen has published eight mystery novels in her award-winning Washington Whodunit series featuring amateur sleuth Kit Marshall.

Rose Solari is the author of three full-length collections of poetry, *The Last Girl*, *Orpheus in the Park*, and *Difficult Weather*; the one-act play “Looking for Guenevere,” in which she also performed; and a novel, *A Secret Woman*. In her work for the stage, she has collaborated and performed her poetry with several dance companies and the Folger Consort. She has lectured and taught writing



workshops at many institutions, including Arizona State University's Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing; the University of Maryland, College Park; St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland; the Centre for Creative Writing at Oxford University in Oxford, England; and the Writer's Center in Bethesda, Maryland. In 2010, she co-founded Alan Squire Publishing, a small press with big ideas.

Mike Tidwell is a journalist, author, and climate activist living in Takoma Park, MD. His most recent book is an exploration of global warming's impact in his own front yard, *The Lost Trees of Willow Avenue: A Story of Climate and Hope on One American Street* (St. Martin's Press, March 2025). Publishers Weekly gave the book a coveted starred review. Mike's previous six books include *Bayou Farewell* (2003), about the disappearing wetlands of south Louisiana, and *The Ponds of Kalambayi* (1990), a Peace Corps memoir. As a past contributing writer for the Washington Post, he won four Lowell Thomas Awards, the highest prize in American travel journalism. Find him on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and on X at @MikeTidwell4.

Vicki Valosik is a masters synchronized swimmer and an editorial director at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, where she also teaches graduate-level writing courses. Her writing has appeared in publications such as the Atlantic, Smithsonian, American Scholar, and Washington Post Magazine. Her debut book, *Swimming Pretty: The Untold Story of Women in Water*, was selected for NPR's Books We Love 2024, named an Amazon Editor's Pick for Best History Books, and shortlisted for the Vikki Orvice Award for Women's Sports Writing.

Jeannie Vanasco is the author, most recently, of *A Silent Treatment*, which Booklist, in its starred review, described as "a beautiful gift to all who have struggled to care for a loved one in the way they needed." Her other memoirs include *Things We Didn't Talk About When I Was a Girl* — a New York Times Editors' Choice and selected as a best book of 2019 by TIME, Esquire, Kirkus, among others — and *The Glass Eye*, which Poets & Writers called one of the five best literary nonfiction debuts of 2017. She lives in Baltimore and teaches at Towson University.

Michele Wolf is the author of the poetry collections *Peacocks on the Streets*, *Immersion*, *Conversations During Sleep*, and *The Keeper of Light*. Her poems have been featured in the Southern Review, Poetry, the Hudson Review, and many other literary journals and anthologies. Among her honors are the Anhinga Prize for Poetry, a Maryland State Arts Council literary arts Independent Artist Award, and fellowships from the Montgomery County Arts and Humanities Council, Yaddo, the Edward F. Albee Foundation, and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. She teaches at the Writer's Center.

Jennifer Bort Yacovissi's novel, *Up the Hill to Home*, tells the story of four generations of a family in Washington, DC, from the Civil War to the Great Depression. Her short fiction has appeared in Gargoyle and Pen-in-Hand. Jenny is a member of PEN/America and the National Book Critics' Circle, reviews regularly for the Independent, and serves as president of the Independent's board of directors. She served as chair or program director of the Washington Writers Conference from 2017 to 2024 and for several years was president of the Annapolis chapter of the Maryland Writers' Association.



Keynote Speakers



Aran Shetterly is a journalist, narrative historian, and the author of *Morningside: The 1979 Greensboro Massacre and the Struggle for an American City's Soul* and *The Americano: Fighting with Castro for Cuba's Freedom*. He founded, edited, and wrote for *Inside Mexico*, the most widely distributed English-language periodical in Mexico. He grew up in rural Maine, studied English literature and Spanish language and culture at Harvard College, and earned an M.A. in American and New England studies from the University of Southern Maine. Between 1993 and 2016, he lived in Costa Rica, Cuba, and Mexico. Since then, he's lived in Charlottesville, VA, with his wife, Margot Lee Shetterly, and their son, Giles.



Margot Lee Shetterly is the author of *Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race*. She is also the founder of the Human Computer Project, an endeavor that is recovering the names and accomplishments of all the women who worked as computer scientists, mathematicians, and engineers at the NACA and NASA from the 1930s through the 1980s. She is a Hampton, VA, native, University of Virginia graduate, an entrepreneur, and an intrepid traveler who spent 11 years living in Mexico. She currently lives in Charlottesville, VA, with her husband, Aran Shetterly, and their son, Giles.

Lifetime Achievement Award



Richard Peabody has spent most of his life in the DMV. He wears many literary hats: poet, author, literary editor, publisher, teacher, and mentor. The author of five volumes of poetry, three short-story collections, and a novella (not to mention assorted chapbooks, and recordings), he has also edited or co-edited 27 anthologies. St. Martin's Press published his Mondo series (*Mondo Barbie*, *Mondo Elvis*, *Mondo Marilyn Monroe*, and *Mondo James Dean*), followed by the Grace and Gravity Series, seven collections of DMV-area women fiction writers. The last on Peabody's watch was

Abundant Grace, published in 2016 by his own Paycock Press. Other Paycock titles that have generated a lot of attention include *Daisy Buchanan's Daughter* by Tom Carson and *Flying Home: Seven Stories of the Secret City* by David Nicholson. Peabody taught graduate fiction writing at Johns Hopkins University for 17 years. He has been a fellow at the Blue Mountain Center, the Virginia Center for the Arts, and the Byrdcliffe Arts Colony. His most recent poetry volume, *Guinness on the Quay*, was published in Ireland (Salmon Poetry, 2019). *The Richard Peabody Reader*, a career-encompassing collection, was released in 2015 by Alan Squire Publishing as the first book in their ASP Legacy Series. His two forthcoming books are *The Barking Dogs of Taos* (Salmon Poetry) and the story collection *Popsicles on the Moon* (Červená Barva Press).



Agents

Ritu Anand of [D4EO Literary Agency](#) has been a passionate storyteller since childhood. Caught and admonished for writing (under her desk) during a math class, she recalls being highly inconvenienced. Inspiration had struck from within, and there was little else she could have done to curtail it. Today, Ritu has earned the recognition of being an award-winning author of *Kara's Dreams*, a picture book about being resilient in the face of adversity. She gives tremendous credit to the various teachers at Mater Dei Convent who, in the formative years of her life, laid an impression upon her. No good story should ever be filed away but shared, she believes. That is why she has chosen to champion voices yet unheard. Ritu is excited to represent writers of kid lit, literary fiction, general fiction, and historical fiction. She joined D4EO in spring 2023, where her clientele has been growing. Soon, she will share some good news about two of her clients catching the interest of two different publishers. (P.S.: *Kara's Dreams* was translated to Spanish — *Los Suenos de Kara*. Her third picture book, *I Am My Language*, is expected to be released this winter.)

Two fun facts: Ritu loves to speak in full sentences to her puppy. And she believes his vocabulary has been growing.

Represents: Fiction (adult, YA, middle grade, and children's)

Would love to be pitched the next: *The Godfather*.

Do NOT pitch: Erotica.

Instagram: [@Rituwrites4kids](#)

Jessica Berg is the founder and agency director of [Rosecliff Literary](#), a boutique agency built on the belief that ambitious writers deserve transparency, strategy, and a seat at the table. She earned her MFA from Spalding University and brings more than a decade of experience to her work with clients. In addition to her agency role, Jessica serves as a contributing editor for *Writer's Digest*, where she writes and consults on topics related to querying, craft, comp titles, and the business of authorship. She teaches globally on query letters, positioning, and sustainable author careers. Jessica serves on the board of the Historical Novel Society and is a chair for the National Women's Book Association. She lives online at [@jessica__berg](#), where she talks about querying, the writing life, and the realities of publishing with transparency, humor, and a touch of glam. "My cat, Larry, has been to 16 countries, and I speak to him in no fewer than five languages," she adds.

Represents: Both fiction and nonfiction with a strong voice, emotional resonance, and something subversive at their core. In fiction, she's drawn to genre-blending work that confidently sits in one lane. She has an eye out right now for horror of all types, as well as historical fiction, women's fiction, upmarket, and book-club novels. As always, she'd love to see more upmarket book-club fiction with big feelings and big hooks. She's always looking for stories from queer, trans, and BIPOC authors, especially those exploring identity, longing, ambition, or survival. In nonfiction, she's looking for narrative projects with a wide reach: untold histories, true crime, pop culture, women's health, wellness and career books for women, and smart self-help or personal development. Across all genres, she prioritizes platformed authors, distinctive voice, and projects that feel urgent, resonant, and unafraid to challenge the status quo.

Would love to be pitched the next: *Half His Age* by Jennette McCurdy, *The Newmans* by Jennifer Niven, *How to Kill a Guy in Ten Dates* by Shailee Thompson, *The Eights* by Joanna Miller, or any sci-fi, fantasy, or domestic suspense.



Caitlin Blasdell has been a literary agent with [Liza Dawson Associates](#) since 2002 with a focus on commercial fiction. Before becoming an agent, she was a senior editor at HarperCollins Publishers. A graduate of Williams College, she lives in Westchester County, New York, with her husband and children.

Two fun facts: My husband and I own a commercial fruit orchard in Dutchess County. We don't live there, but we drive up almost every weekend during the growing season, and I know more than I ever expected to about fruit trees and berry bushes. Also, I live in a fraternity house. No, not really, but I do live with my husband and four sons, so it feels like that sometimes!

Represents: Fiction (adult, YA, select MG); sci-fi/fantasy/horror; romance; women's fiction; thriller/mystery.

Would love to be pitched the next: I don't have a wish list because I never know what I'm going to fall in love with. That's part of what makes the literary agent job special! But lately, I've been wishing to open my inbox and find a new Maeve Binchy or Rosamund Pilcher. I'd love a big, sprawling, epic fantasy like those by Brian McClellan or Samantha Shannon. And I wouldn't say no to a smart space opera full of heart and action. And...you get the idea!

Do NOT pitch: Poetry, nonfiction, or short stories/novellas. I'm also probably the wrong agent for serial-killer thrillers.

Instagram: [@lizadawsonassoc](#)

Matt Carlini joined [Javelin](#) in 2018 as a literary agent/foreign-rights director after working at Little, Brown & Company and Vigliano Associates in New York. He has worked with a variety of bestselling and acclaimed authors, including James Patterson, Elin Hilderbrand, two Pulitzer Prize finalists, a National Book Award winner, and a Man Booker Prize finalist. He has also orchestrated successful international sales campaigns for Mike Tyson, Pearl Jam, Andrew Morton, Gary Zukav, and others. A native of Knoxville, Tennessee, Matt is a graduate of Georgetown University.

Represents: Narrative nonfiction (politics, current events, journalism, cultural criticism, pop culture, and sports).

Jennifer Chen Tran is an agent at [Glass Literary Management](#). With over a dozen years of experience in publishing, Jennifer is passionate about nurturing and championing authors and their creative lives. She represents a wide range of talent, including journalists, physicians, entrepreneurs, thought leaders, chefs, and graphic novelists, among others. Prior to joining Glass Literary Management, Jennifer was a literary agent at several West Coast literary agencies and served as Of Counsel at the New Press. She obtained her Juris Doctor from Northeastern School of Law in Boston, MA, and a Bachelor of Arts in English literature from Washington University in St. Louis. She is an attorney in good standing in New York and California. Jennifer is an editorial agent who believes in the art of collaboration and works closely with her authors from concept to proposal to publication and beyond. As a person of color and the daughter of Taiwanese immigrants, she is committed to amplifying voices from underrepresented and marginalized communities. Her ultimate goal is to work in concert with authors to shape books that will have a lasting positive social impact on the world — books that illuminate, entertain, and inspire.

Genres represented: Nonfiction: cookbooks, memoir, narrative nonfiction, neurodivergent, prescriptive nonfiction, middle grade, and YA (including BIPOC and LGBTQIA+). Fiction: graphic novels, book-club fiction, commercial fiction, and women's fiction.

Bluesky: [@jenchentrans](#)

Instagram: [@jenchentrans](#)



Rose Conway is a literary agent and publishing consultant empowering fiction authors through representation and nonfiction authors through strategic guidance to make informed publishing decisions. As an agent with [Confluence Literary Agency](#), Rose channels her consulting expertise into author representation. She seeks upmarket and smart commercial fiction with inventive structures, emotional depth, and distinctive voices. Think braided narratives, unexpected POVs, and prose that takes creative risks. After years of witnessing authors navigate mounting obstacles in the publishing landscape with increasingly contradictory and inconsistent advice, Rose founded [Foreword Literary Consulting, LLC](#) as a trusted resource for strategic guidance. Whether pursuing independent publishers who offer strong editorial support or Big Five houses when the fit is right, her focus remains on long-term career development. Rose's goal is to help authors lay the foundation so that, years down the line, they can look back proudly at the body of work they've built. Rose also serves on the board of sparrow stories, a nonprofit making ghostwriting accessible to community advocates and nonprofit leaders. She holds a Master's in publishing from London College of Communication and a double Bachelor's in English and communication studies from Villanova University.

Represents: Fiction — adult and YA, commercial, literary, and upmarket.

Would love to be pitched the next: *Fruit of the Dead* by Rachel Lyon; *Piglet* by Lottie Hazell.

Do NOT pitch: Historical fiction, sci-fi in outer space, vampire romances, or a story that begins with an escape from an abusive relationship.

Instagram: @bookswithroseconway

Sam Farkas of Jill Grinberg Literary Management grew up in South Jersey and attended the College of William & Mary, where she received her B.A. in history and English. Post college, she moved to New York City to intern with Maria B. Campbell Associates, and it was there she discovered her love for collaborating with agents and publishers around the world. She worked in the rights division at Penguin, where she was involved in major international publishing events for authors such as John Green, Anna Dewdney, and more before she joined the JGLM team in 2018. She represents a client list that spans age categories and genres. She lives in Queens with her husband and two cats, and when she's not reading, she likes to dabble in various artistic hobbies and work on perfecting her risotto recipe.

Represents: Adult, YA, middle-grade: fantasy, romance, book-club fiction, mystery/suspense, horror, literary, speculative, LitRPG (literary role-playing game), and historical fiction.

Would love to be pitched the next: *Holes* by Louis Sachar; John Green; *Grasshopper Jungle* by Andrew Smith; *Dark Matter* by Blake Crouch.

Do NOT pitch: Memoir (unless food memoir), graphic novels, police procedurals.

Instagram: @sambfarkas

Bluesky: @sambfarkas

Kathryn Fay is publisher and founding editor of [Modern Artist Press](#), a new woman-owned indie press that looks to expand and explode the definition of a modern artist by publishing literary fiction. She has over 15 years of experience writing, editing, and publishing museum catalogues, biographies, memoirs, and fiction. Her interest in art and literature was inspired by her experience growing up in a foreign-service family that was posted in Brazil, South Korea, Morocco, Russia, Argentina, and the United States. She holds a B.A. in English and art history from the College of William & Mary and an M.A. in art history from American University.

Represents: Literary fiction.

Would love to be pitched the next: Linked short-story collection or novel-in-stories (*My*



Monticello, The Secret Lives of Church Ladies, Jollof Rice and Other Revolutions); multi-generational novel (*America Is Not the Heart, A Place for Us, The Sleepwalker's Guide to Dancing*); stories told through structural experimentation (*If an Egyptian Cannot Speak English, The Swimmers, Trust*); and literary stories that incorporate speculative, horror, and genre elements (*Lesser Known Monsters of the 21st Century, Chain-Gang All-Stars, Her Body and Other Parties, Nightbitch*).

Do NOT pitch: YA, middle grade, picture books, nonfiction, graphic novels, or poetry.

Instagram: @modernartistpress

Juan Garcia-Davis, a novelist, educator, and lifelong revolutionary, founded and operates [Feathered Serpent Press](#), which exists to publish the work that establishment imprints overlook: fiction with teeth, with history in its bones, with something genuinely at stake. We specialize in dystopian fiction, speculative fiction, and dark literary fiction. Feathered Serpent Press is an independent publisher rooted in Chicanismo and built on the conviction that the most urgent stories live at the intersection of culture, resistance, and imagination. Our aesthetic is what we call academic punk, rigorous in craft, uncompromising in voice, and visually sharp from the spine out. We don't soften edges to reach broader markets. We sharpen them. Feathered Serpent Press is a small operation by design, not by accident. That means every title we take on receives direct editorial attention, intentional production, and a publisher who treats your book like it matters, because here, it does. We're not a warehouse. We're a press. If your work carries cultural weight, refuses easy categorization, and asks something real of its reader, we want to hear from you. We're building something with intention, and we're looking for authors who are doing the same.

Two fun facts: My kids say I'm the best dad in the world. I have more pictures of my cats than I do of anyone else in my family.

Represents: Fiction — sci-fi/fantasy, speculative, thrillers.

Would love to be pitched the next: *Dungeon Crawler Carl*.

Instagram: @jjgallo_fsp

Robert Guinsler has been with [Sterling Lord Literistic, Inc.](#) since 2000. His general curiosity in all things has allowed him the opportunity to represent a wide variety of prize-winning and New York Times bestselling nonfiction authors and projects. From the geopolitical mosaics of journalists Rania Abouzeid and Mikhail Zygar, to the impassioned memoirs of Alex Marzano-Lesnevich and legendary gay rights activist Cleve Jones, to the comedic collections of Sarah Colonna, Phoebe Robinson, and Egypt's own Bassem Youssef, most every avenue of the nonfiction spectrum can be found on his list. As well, he has been a champion of LGBTQ+ voices his entire career, and some of his authors include Hugh Ryan, Guy Branum, Peter Staley, the Estate of Gilbert Baker, and Evan Fallenberg, among many others. Additionally, he represents the estate of Anne Sexton.

Gabrielle Harbowy is an associate literary agent at [Corvisiero Literary Agency](#). She has more than 20 years of experience in the publishing industry, from her entry into the field as a pricing analyst at Scholastic, to becoming a full-time editor and part-time writer. As a third-generation reader of fantasy and science fiction, a love for the speculative is in her blood. Gabrielle was managing editor at Dragon Moon Press for a decade, has worked with award winners and international bestsellers, and is passionate about elevating the authors around her. A three-time published novelist, short-story author, and award-nominated anthologist, Gabrielle has spoken, given workshops, and run D&D and Pathfinder games at numerous conventions. She is a member of SFWA, IAMTW, and the LGBTQ+ Editors Association.

Two fun facts: I play D&D on a livestream. I'm a longtime pianist teaching myself to play the harp.



Represents: Adult and YA sci-fi (especially hard sci-fi with feels), fantasy, LGBTQ, romcom.

Would love to be pitched the next: *Iron Widow* (Xiran Jay Zhao).

Do NOT pitch: Horror, anything dystopian/apocalyptic, climate fiction, global disasters, religious fiction, nonfiction, poetry, story collections.

Instagram: @gabrielleharbowy

Michelle Z. Jackson founded the [Jackson Literary Agency](#) in July 2025. In her long literary career, Jackson has been both a self-published and a traditionally published author, as well as an educator. A member of AALA and a veteran of Olswanger Literary and LCS Literary Services, she is actively seeking new talent at Jackson Literary. Authors who work with her “can expect professionalism, a collaborative relationship, as well as open and honest communication during their journey to publication.”

Represents: Adult fiction (commercial, historical, humor, new adult, romance, thriller, women’s, literary, inspirational, multicultural, psychological thrillers, romcom, speculative, light fantasy, magical realism, and paranormal); YA fiction (contemporary, historical, Christian, romance, speculative, light fantasy, magical realism, and paranormal); select middle-grade fiction (commercial, contemporary); fiction and nonfiction picture books (particularly by author/illustrators); and select nonfiction (relationships, lifestyle, cookbooks, travel, true crime, wellness, and self-help).

Barbara Jones is an agent with [the Stuart Krichevsky Literary Agency](#), where she represents literary and upmarket fiction and nonfiction. She has a special interest across all forms in stories told from underrepresented and sometimes controversial points of view, as well as — in fiction and memoir especially — a fondness for storytelling that’s unpretentiously humorous and powerful. Barbara became a literary agent after several decades as an editor, first in magazines (Grand Street, Vogue, Harper’s) and then in books (as editorial director at Hyperion Books and, most recently, as executive editor at Henry Holt). She has led writing workshops for more than 30 years at Yale, New York University, and elsewhere. She lives in Harlem, New York.

Two fun facts: I grew up in Bethesda/Chevy Chase; I’ve appeared as myself in two reality-TV shows (anything to sell a book)!

Represents: Adult narrative nonfiction; a great biography; literary fiction; smart and lighthearted crime fiction; a book about a nun gone rogue.

Would love to be pitched the next: *Wedding People*, *Love Affairs of Nathaniel P.*, *My Monticello*, Claire Keegan novella, *H Is for Hawk*.

Do NOT pitch: Non-literary sci-fi; any romantasy; anything children’s, YA, or graphic.

Instagram: [@voicereader2](#)

Catherine Jones graduated from Kenyon College with a degree in film and English and a concentration in creative writing. She read for the Kenyon Review and Sweet Literary magazine and got her start in publishing as an international literary scout for Edmison/Harper. She has been at [Union Literary](#) since 2023 and started acquiring as an agent in the summer of 2025. She loves character-driven books with heart and humor.

Two fun facts: I collect fossils and I’m a twin.

Represents: Fiction (literary, upmarket, romcoms, and speculative) and select narrative-nonfiction histories.

Would love to be pitched the next: *Mexican Gothic*, *Bridget Jones’s Diary*, or *Where the Crawdads Sing*.



Do NOT pitch: Commercial sci-fi or fantasy (unless there's a mermaid), mystery/crime, children's, illustrated/art books, or poetry.

Sandy Lu founded [Book Wyrms Literary Agency](#) after working as a literary agent for more than a decade at other boutique agencies, including Peter Rubie Literary Agency, Anderson Literary Management, and the L. Perkins Agency. Born and raised in Taiwan, she moved to New York when she was 16 and understands the struggles of immigrants and those straddling two cultures. Lu holds degrees in psychology and sociology, with minors in music, business, and Japanese, and once worked in the theater industry. Her areas of study and work experience greatly inform the kinds of projects she's interested in.

Represents: Fiction that “will draw her in with a unique voice [and] make her miss her bedtime with a thrilling plot...Bonus points if you can make her laugh out loud or unable to hold back tears in public.” She especially loves historical fiction, atmospheric worldbuilding, and anything dark, twisted, or with a supernatural bent. In nonfiction, she's seeking “projects that can make connections about different topics in an unexpected way, explicate complex research for a general audience, introduce the reader to cutting-edged science or previously little known historical facts and figures, teach us new ways to think or clever skills that can improve our daily life, or expand our knowledge and understanding of the world — past, present, and future.”

Bridget Wagner Matzie has represented projects such as the #1 New York Times bestsellers *Shattered* and *Fight* by Jon Allen and Amie Parnes; the Washington Post's #1 New York Times bestseller *The Mueller Report*; the national bestseller *The Case for Impeachment* by Allan Lichtman; *To Raise a Boy* by Washington Post journalist Emma Brown; and Emory professor Ruby Lal's L.A. Times Book Prize finalist, *Empress*, among others. Matzie works as an agent and partner with Aevitas, based in Washington, DC, where Washingtonian Magazine listed her as one of DC's top book agents. She is most interested in strong original ideas, new and international voices, big-think topics, and books that challenge readers and create discussion.

Represents: All nonfiction categories written by experts and leaders in their field (e.g., *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, and *Evicted*).

Do NOT pitch: Fiction or any nonfiction on a topic if you are not a leading expert or leader.

Gina Panettieri is the founder of [Talcott Notch Literary Services](#), a five-member literary agency headquartered in Milford, Connecticut, right on the train line into NY but blessed with a quintessential colonial New England coastal vibe that's an amazing antidote to stress. She's been active in publishing for more than 35 years as an agent, freelance editor, and writer, so she's worked on all sides of the desk. Gina started out writing consumer health articles for national magazines while a college student, first at LIU and then at UVA, and then moved onto writing for magazines at the Macfadden Communications Group that paid a few cents per word (but with frequent publication, it was enough to earn a living in an era of \$250/month rent). Making a living writing quickly became a skill she was teaching other women, who gathered in her living room on Saturday mornings. Being an agent has always come with a mission that way for her. One of Gina's first conversations with a prospective client involves their goals and aspirations. What do you want to achieve with your writing and your work with her? How can she advocate for you? The agency she's grown is very collegial, so if you approach her with a project that has potential but isn't quite right for her, she'll recommend it to the appropriate agent; among the five of them, they represent nearly everything. Here's a few of Talcott Notch's most recognizable projects: *Tier One* series by Andrews & Wilson, *Mercy Carr Mysteries* by Paula Munier, *For Whom The Belle Tolls* by Jaysea Lynn, *A World Worth Saving* by Kyle



Lukoff, *Hitmen* by Scott Deitch, *The Connected Child* by Dr. Karyn Purvis, and *Ca\$hvertising* by Drew Eric Whitman.

Two fun facts: 1) My husband and I met online in a Mafia forum when I was looking for experts for a book, and 2) I once drove a taxi for a year to help pay for tuition.

Represents: In adult fiction: mystery, thriller, romantasy, romance/romcom, women's fiction, horror, dark fantasy, paranormal/supernatural, suspense, grounded near-future sci-fi, and LGBTQ. In adult nonfiction: history, politics, health/medical, career/business, memoir/narrative nonfiction, true crime, military/war history, pop culture, cookbooks, mind/body/spirit, self-help, biography, current affairs. In YA and MG fiction: history, mainstream, mystery, horror, fantasy, romance, humor, and LGBTQ. In YA and MG nonfiction: self-help, biography, politics, history, medical, and psychology.

Would love to be pitched the next: I loved the *Aunties Series* by Jesse Q. Sutanto because of its delightful, immersive sense of family, food, and culture and wonderful, effortless humor.

Do NOT pitch: Poetry, textbooks, scholarly works.

Instagram: [@gina.panettieri](#)

Rita Rosenkranz is founder of [Rita Rosenkranz Literary Agency](#) and a well-established agent specializing in a wide-ranging list/full scope of adult nonfiction subjects. She looks for familiar topics presented freshly and lesser-known subjects presented commercially. She works with mainstream as well as niche/regional publishers, multi-book authors as well as those launching a career.

Two fun facts: Loves to bake biscotti; enjoys the game of squash.

Represents: Adult nonfiction.

Would love to be pitched the next: Book that starts a conversation on a topic we thought we knew but now we have a revelatory slant on it to educate and celebrate.

Do NOT pitch: Areas outside of my adult nonfiction interest.

Noah Grey Rosenzweig of [Triangle House](#) grew up in New Jersey before moving to DC in 2017 and graduating from Georgetown University. He was previously a literary assistant at Ross Yoon Agency, and just completed the editorial fellowship with Grove Atlantic and Roxane Gay Books. Noah is interested in representing both fiction and nonfiction. He is a reader of all fiction but has a particular love for literary, climate, and speculative fiction, as well as the occasional YA novel. He has an eye out for stories that hold up a mirror to our culture in new ways, and he's especially interested in queer and trans coming-of-age fiction, particularly told from a horror perspective. They are also looking for narrative nonfiction that chronicles recent history, cultural trends, technology, and social rules that explain why and how we live in our current world. Above all, Noah is looking for work that is subversive — in prose, style, or subject.

Elizabeth Winick Rubinstein, president and senior agent at [McIntosh & Otis](#), has degrees from New York University and Manhattan School of Music. She began her book-publishing career in subsidiary rights and then took on the responsibilities of acquisitions editor at a major audio publishing imprint. Initially, she joined McIntosh & Otis to manage all subsidiary rights but began working as an agent shortly thereafter. Her primary interests include literary fiction, women's fiction, historical fiction, romance, mystery/suspense, and memoir, along with narrative nonfiction, history, and current affairs. Elizabeth represents numerous New York Times bestsellers and both Agatha and Edgar Award winners and nominees.

John Rudolph joined [Dystel, Goderich & Bourret LLC](#) in 2010 after 12 years as an acquiring children's book editor. He began his career at Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers as an



editorial assistant and then moved to the G.P. Putnam's Sons imprint of the Penguin Young Readers Group, where he eventually served as executive editor on a wide range of young adult, middle-grade, nonfiction, and picture-book titles. He graduated from Amherst College with a double major in Classics and music. While John's list started out as mostly children's books, it has evolved to the point where it is now half adult, half children's authors — and he's looking to maintain that balance. On the children's side, John is keenly interested in middle-grade and YA fiction and would love to find the next great picture book author/illustrator. For adults, he is actively looking for narrative nonfiction, especially in music, sports, history, popular science, “big think,” performing arts, health, business, memoir, military history, and humor. He is also interested in commercial fiction but is very selective in what he takes on.

Katharine Sands of the [Sarah Jane Freymann Literary Agency](#) has worked with a varied list of authors on a diverse array of books, including fiction, memoir, and nonfiction. Among the books she represents are Barbara Barnett's *The Apothecary's Curse*, nominated for the Bram Stoker Award in the First Novel category, and its sequel, *Alchemy of Glass*, as well as *Girl Walks Out of a Bar*, a memoir by Lisa Smith that was featured by People Magazine as Notable Nonfiction, and *I'm Speaking: Every Woman's Guide to Finding Your Voice and Using It Fearlessly* by Jessica Doyle-Mekkes. Katharine likes books that have a clear benefit for readers' lives in categories of food, travel, lifestyle, home arts, beauty, wisdom, relationships, parenting, and fresh looks, which might be at issues, life challenges, or popular culture. When reading fiction, she wants to be compelled and propelled by urgent storytelling and hooked by characters. For memoir, femoir, and himoir, she likes to be transported to a world rarely or newly observed. She has worked on a diverse list of titles, including *Youth to Power* by teen climate activist Jamie Margolin; *Sell Your Story in a Single Sentence: Advice from the Front lines of Hollywood* by Lane Shefter Bishop; *Spiritual Pregnancy: Nine Months that Change Your Life Before You Give Birth* by Dr. Shawn Tassone and Dr. Kathryn Landherr; *Talk to Strangers: How Everyday Random Encounters Can Expand Your Business, Career, Income and Life* by David Topus, and countless others. She is also the agent provocateur behind *Making the Perfect Pitch: How to Catch a Literary Agent's Eye*, a collection of pitching wisdom from leading literary agents.

Two fun facts: I am a foodie, and I have a thing for hotels.

Represents: I work with fiction and nonfiction and do not think categorically. For me, selecting a client is project-based.

Would love to be pitched the next: Page-turning thriller.

Do NOT pitch: Tech stuff.

Ellen Scordato is a partner at [Stonesong](#) with more than 35 years' experience in trade-book publishing. She started at St. Martin's Press, then Charles Scribner's Sons and Random House, where she learned from some of the best in the business. She joined Stonesong as a partner in 2002, where she initially specialized in four-color and packaged titles. After 20 years, she returned to her first, best love, genre fiction, and currently represents Jennifer Williamson, S.K. Golden, Victor Suthammanont, Elena Hartwell (Taylor), Randy Overbeck, and Alex Myers, among others. A Wellesley College graduate with a B.A. in Classics and art history, she lives in Manhattan with her husband and a couple of literary cats.

Represents: Romance, thriller/mystery, dark academia settings, and a touch of the supernatural. Ellen is looking for fast-paced contemporary mysteries and thrillers, romantic suspense, and caper thrillers with charismatic protagonists and fresh settings with the potential for series. She's a fan of



supernatural thrillers, dark academia, hardboiled heroines, and clever police procedurals for today's readers, but she's not looking for cozy mysteries or historical romance. She's got a growing interest in mashups like horror romance or supernatural detective stories. She'll read submissions set in the literary world, but if it's in a tried-and-true setting (writing conference, bookstore, etc.), she'd like to see something innovative or an unexpected twist.

Two fun facts: I'm a member of the Circumnavigator's Club, and I have a leash-trained cat.

Would love to be pitched the next: John Banville, Donna Leon, Donna Tartt, Freida McFadden.

Do NOT pitch: Memoir, sci-fi, historical fiction, or cozies.

Facebook: StonesongNYC

Instagram: @stonesongnyc

Shawn Reilly Simmons is the publisher and CEO of [Level Best Books](#). She has an extensive background in developmental and line editing and creates most of the cover art for Level Best's books. Simmons serves on the national board of Bouchercon and will co-chair the event in 2027. She is a member of Sisters in Crime, Mystery Writers of America, the International Thriller Writers, and the Crime Writers' Association in the U.K. and is also the Agatha and Anthony Award-winning author of the Red Carpet Catering Mysteries, as well as over 30 published short stories.

Represents: Mysteries (traditional, police procedurals, cozies, noir, and other crime fiction driven by strong characters, compelling plots, and a clear sense of place).

Max Sinsheimer launched [Sinsheimer Literary](#) in the fall of 2016 after nearly seven years as an editor at Oxford University Press. He represents exclusively adult nonfiction across a range of genres, but with a particular interest in food and culture, history, popular science, and social issues. As a former academic editor, he welcomes scholarly works that he think can reach a crossover trade market. For instance, a few food studies and "issues" books he's represented include Marion Nestle's *Unsavory Truth* (Basic Books), Michael Jacobson's *Salt Wars* (MIT Press), and Catherine Donnelly's *Ending the War on Artisan Cheese* (Chelsea Green). He'd love to take on more popular science, particularly where there is a personal narrative woven in. He's also keen to represent environmental and social-issue books, having worked on *Disposable City* (Nation Books), about Miami's existential sea-level-rise crisis, and *If I Don't Make It, I Love You* (Skyhorse), an anthology of narratives from school-shooting survivors. He's not afraid to take on difficult, depressing topics, but he does expect the writer to leave the reader with something hopeful to cling to. Really, though, he has eclectic tastes and wants to see more pitches in his inbox. So, if you have an exceptional nonfiction manuscript (or even just a complete proposal and sample chapter), he wants to see it! He'd love to be pitched the next *Cobalt Red*, *Madhouse at the End of the Earth*, *Why Fish Don't Exist*, or *Maybe You Should Talk to Someone*. DO NOT pitch him diet books, wellness, self-help, or spirituality. "I'm much more on the narrative than the prescriptive end of things!" (X: @SinsheimerLit; Instagram: @msin10)

Hannah Teachout of [Folio Literary Management](#) loves a good adventure on and off the page, but especially the stories that dig into themes of identity and explore the metaphors of magic and monsters. She works on middle grade, young adult, and adult fiction across genres and loves a speculative or romantic bent and distinct voice. She earned an MFA in Writing for Children & Young Adults from Vermont College of Fine Arts but pivoted to working in the publishing industry shortly after graduating. Since then, she's worked as a bookseller, festival organizer, and freelance editor before landing at Folio, where she's had the privilege to support Lauren Spieller and John Cusick before beginning to focus on building her own list.

Two fun facts: I've traveled to nearly 50 countries and I once held a baby shark!



Represents: Fiction for adults, YA, and MG; romance, fantasy, speculative, thriller, book club

Would love to be pitched the next: T. Kingfisher-esque horror.

Do NOT pitch: Political thrillers or cop stories.

Instagram: [@hmteachout](#)

Paula Weiman (they/them) joined the [ASH Literary](#) team in 2023 as an agent after a career in literary scouting and educational publishing. Based in New York and with a background in translation rights, they bring an international approach to selling their clients' work. They represent authors and illustrators across a wide range of children's categories, from picture book through young adult, as well as speculative fiction and illustration for adult audiences. Their goal is to help as many children as possible to see their experiences represented on the page for the first time. Paula is a member of the American Association of Literary Agents and a 2025 Literary Agents of Change mentee.

Represents: Adult speculative fiction; YA fantasy, rom-com, suspense/thriller, horror, and contemporary fiction; middle-grade contemporary, fantasy, mystery, and literary fiction; and picture books.

Two fun facts: I used to sail competitively (but not very well). I chose my college major in part because I read a copy of Charles Santore's *The Little Mermaid* in second grade.

Would love to be pitched the next: *Gingerbread* (Helen Oyeyemi) or *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks* (E. Lockhart).

Do NOT pitch: police procedurals or Dungeons & Dragons-inspired fantasy.

Instagram: [@tinyfairyhunter](#) or [@ashliterary](#)

Christina Zobel (she/her) is the subsidiary rights associate at [JABberwocky Literary](#). She manages foreign and audio rights in addition to a small client list. She graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a dual degree in English and Greco-Roman history. Before joining JABberwocky, she worked at Harlequin Books (HarperCollins) and has previously interned with Simone Garzella Book Scouting, Anthem Press, and Folio Literary Management. Beyond her literary interests, she is an avid fan of videogames, can be found laughing or crying at the latest episodes of "Critical Role" and "Dimension 20," and plays a truly absurd amount of Tabletop RPGs (who doesn't love adventures with friends?).

Two fun facts: I'm an equestrian, a marching-band geek, and I have a collection of over 30 houseplants!

Represents: Fiction: adult, new adult, romantasy, romance, upmarket, women's, book-club, historical, fantasy, science fiction, and horror. (My full MSWL can be found on JABberwocky's website.)

Would love to be pitched the next: *Cleat Cute* by Meryl Wilsner; *Just for the Summer* by Abby Jimenez; *Daughter of the Moon Goddess* by Sue Lynn Tan; *A Fate Inked in Blood* by Danielle L. Jensen; *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow* by Gabrielle Zevin; *The Henna Artist* by Alka Joshi.

Do NOT pitch: Mystery, thriller, psychological suspense, literary fiction, YA, middle grade, picture books, graphic novels, or any type of nonfiction



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