

N W S

NATIONAL WRITERS SERIES

Summer 2021 Virtual Author Series



Robin Wall Kimmerer

Emily Henry

Dax-Devlon Ross

Megan Miranda

Susie Yang

John U. Bacon

A year-round book festival

WELCOME TO THE NWS 2021 VIRTUAL AUTHOR SEASON

It's hard to believe it's been three months since I started here at the National Writers Series.

The days have been a whirlwind of authors and writing classes and connecting with the incredible literary community here in Traverse City. I'm so happy to have immersed myself with a group of people who love books just as much as I do. Thank you for helping me feel at home in this new role.

It's even harder to believe more than a year has passed since NWS switched to virtual events in the face of COVID-19. The love of great books and great conversations brought our community together over the past 14 months, and we're grateful not only to the talented authors who have shared their writing and wisdom with us, but also to the people of Traverse City and beyond who have shown their support for our work.

Because of our incredible NWS friends and sponsors, we were able to hold a record-breaking Battle of the Books via Zoom in March, continue our poetry workshops, graduate a new class of Front Street Writers, and provide four \$1,000 scholarships to bright students headed to college to pursue writing careers. And through it all, we've hosted nearly 30 authors on the virtual stage.

I'd also like to say a special thank-you to the NWS staff and board. Your dedication, hard work, and creativity are true blessings to this organization. And to our volunteers... we can't wait to see you again!

We sincerely wish we were back at our beloved City Opera House full

time this summer, and we are making every effort to return safely for many events this fall. When we booked our summer authors, it was not yet time to consider in-person events, though those are now on the horizon. While we miss seeing our NWS family in person, we've also been loving our virtual events...and it seems like you have too!

Even when we're back in person, we'll keep a virtual option available for our audience. We want to continue to make our events accessible for folks all over the country and sometimes even the world. (Perhaps one day we'll be the International Writers Series!)

I can't tell you how excited I am for this summer line-up, which brings in new voices, a few NWS alums, and an array of books that speak to all kinds of readers and writers. I hope you enjoy the six events we have planned for this summer, and we look forward to seeing you on Zoom or in person one day soon.

Cheers,



JILLIAN MANNING
Executive Director
National Writers Series



38

STATES WHERE
VIEWERS HAVE
TUNED IN FROM

29

AUTHORS HAVE
SPOKEN FROM
THE VIRTUAL STAGE

1,000

NWS PODCAST
LISTENS
PER MONTH

450

+ REGISTRATIONS
PER NWS EVENT

9,000

VIEWS OF PAST VIRTUAL
EVENTS ON YOUTUBE

OUR MISSION

The National Writers Series of Traverse City is a nonprofit organization dedicated to holding great conversations with today's best authors and building the reading & writing skills of youth.



WELCOME TO THE NWS 2021 VIRTUAL AUTHOR SEASON

Welcome to the story.

Which story? you ask. Your story, our story, the stories guest authors bring with them when they come to the National Writers Series. Who are we? Where are we? I think of Henry David Thoreau's 1848 essay "Ktaadn."

The first time I read it, I felt, as Emily Dickinson said one would feel in the presence of a poem, that the top of the head had been taken off, not of course in any permanent way, so to speak, but the way that Art can do—to stun, amaze, change, delight, entertain.

Here's Thoreau:

"On the 31st of August, 1846, I left Concord in Massachusetts for Bangor

and the backwoods of Maine, by way of the railroad and steamboat... I proposed to make excursions to Mount Ktaadn, the second highest mountain in New England..."

He goes on for several exhilarating pages, passing through a "wild" place of "wind, rocks & trees," until finally, he writes—and this is the part, because it seems so surprising, electric, inevitable—coming out of nowhere:

"What is it to be admitted to a museum, to see a myriad of particular things, compared with being shown some star's surface, some hard matter in its home! I stand in awe of my body, this matter to which I am

bound has become so strange to me. I fear not spirits, ghosts, of which I am one,—that my body might,—but I fear bodies, I tremble to meet them. What is this Titan that has possession of me? Talk of mysteries! Think of our life in nature,—daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it,—rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! the *solid* earth! the *actual* world! the *common sense*! *Contact! Contact!* Who are we? Where are we?"

These seem like good questions.

Questions that novels and nonfiction books and young adult novels and graphic novels and the conversations we have onstage at NWS try to answer. Journeys up and down the

mountain. As we gather and talk about the story at hand.

We're so glad you're here. Thanks for sticking with us through this past year. We need each other. Need the stories, the ones that say, *Here we are.*



DOUG STANTON
Co-founder
National
Writers Series



Kudos to the 2021 NWS Scholarship Winners!

To read the winning entries, visit NationalWritersSeries.org

Leslie Lee Nonfiction Award

BROOKE ESSENBERG

Ellsworth Community Schools, Senior
For the Love of All Things Good and Holy Girl, Don't Squash the Squash

"Writing about the world, my thoughts, feelings and experiences, just makes everything make more sense, and I'm a fan of anything that makes life a little clearer."



Robert & Marcy Branski Poetry Award

KALLIE CROUCH

Mancelona High School / Front Street Writers, Senior
Atlas Revisited

"My love for writing comes from the world around me, and the beauty I see in the small details of the natural world and the creatures that live within it."



William R. Montgomery Fiction Award

SONJA DANIELS-MOEHLER

Homeschool, Junior
The Thrum

"To me, stories are an extraordinary part of our lives, and finding and writing them down helps us understand the world we all share."



Judith Lang Journalism Award

DEUCALION SHETLER

North Central Academy / Front Street Writers, Senior
America Divided

"I want to write stories that people can see themselves in. I know I can show people that they are not alone using my words."



Thanks to all those who have so generously supported these scholarships! Heartfelt thanks, also, to our partner, the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation and NWS Scholarship Coordinator Gina Thornbury of the Community Foundation. Thanks to those who gave so generously to our NWS college scholarship fund awarded in partnership with the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation: Leslie Lee, Marcy and Bob Branski, Anne Montgomery, and Judith Lang.

RAISING WRITERS



HONING THE SKILLS OF YOUNG, PASSIONATE READERS AND WRITERS

The Writers Series uses proceeds from its author events to help support its several Raising Writers programs

FRONT STREET WRITERS

Front Street Writers offers middle school and high school writers an award-winning program to hone their skills. From a semester-long creative writing intensive to weekend workshops to free masterclasses with visiting NWS authors, Front Street Writers encourages a lifelong love of writing for northern Michigan students.

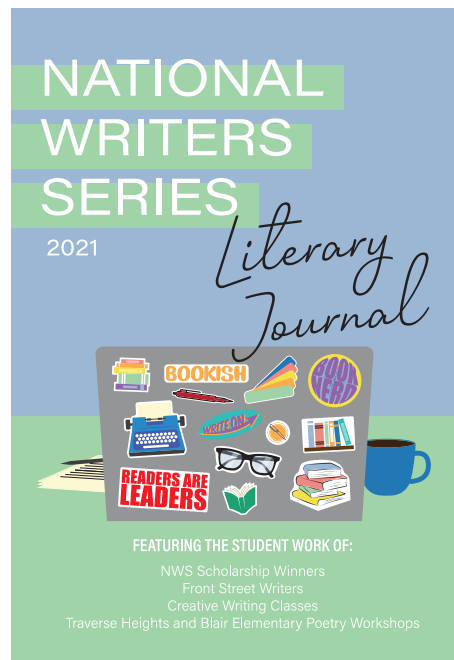
NWS LITERARY JOURNAL

Published once a year, the *NWS Literary Journal* highlights selected student works from our creative writing classes, poetry workshops, scholarship competition, and more. Copies of the journal are available in digital and print format at NationalWritersSeries.org.

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

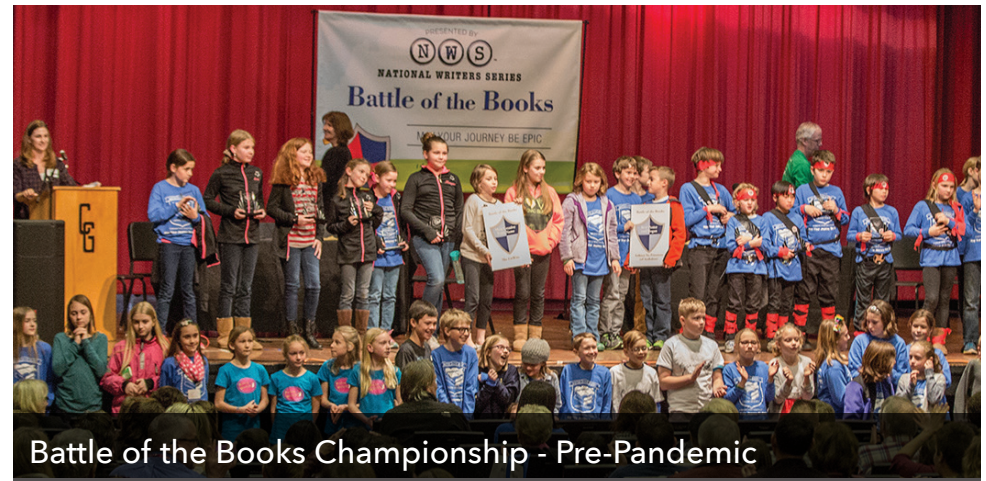
In partnership with the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation, NWS has awarded 38 students with \$56,000 in scholarship money.

The winning pieces are published in the *NWS Literary Journal* each spring.



POETRY WORKSHOPS

Each year, we host poetry workshops with Traverse Heights and Blair elementary school fourth and fifth graders. We believe in the power of poetry to help young people find their voices and express themselves creatively.



Battle of the Books Championship - Pre-Pandemic

BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

Launched in 2016, Battle of the Books Grand Traverse is a free, book-based trivia competition. Dozens of teams read books provided by NWS and then compete before judges to show what they know. This program has become wildly popular, filling up even in a virtual pandemic year with more than 350 students.

Battle of the Books is a huge endeavor, made possible with a partnership with the Traverse Area District Library, dedicated volunteers, generous sponsors, and the leadership of program coordinator Marcy Lindberg.

THE BATTLE GOES ON!

What a year for Battle of the Books, Pandemic Edition! More than 350 kids and 62 teams participated—a record year!—and it was so fun to see all the costumes, cheers, and secret hand signals the kids had devised to make our Zoom battles fun.

2021 broke another record with our first ever Battle of the Books co-champions: **Where the Wild Books Are** and **Little Readers in the Big Books!** These two teams achieved a tie score after completing the Battle of the Books finale and two rounds of tie breaker questions. They were amazing!

Extra cheers to the Battle of the Books planning committee and judges—Marcy Lindberg, Megan Shapiro, Tracy Coe, Judy Arnold, Dawn Oh, Sera Thompson, Rorie Lewis, Martha Topol and Andy Schuck—who made all of this possible, especially in this pandemic year. Here's to great books!



IT'S A TIE! The 2021 Battle of the Books championship teams are **Where the Wild Books Are** (top) & **Little Readers in the Big Books**.

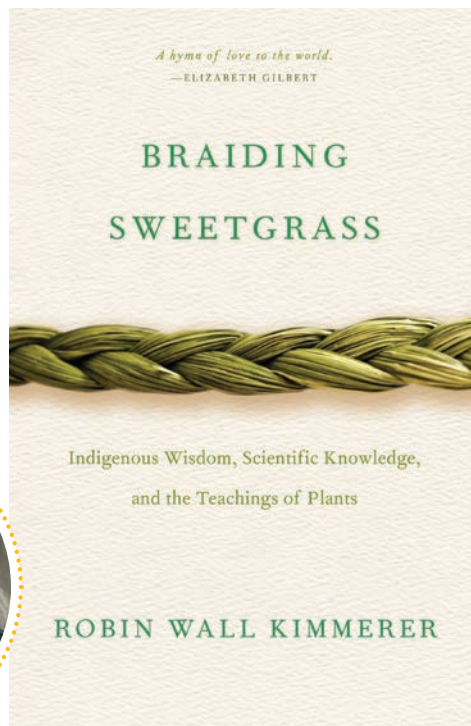
JUNE 10, 7PM • \$12 VIRTUAL TICKETED EVENT

ROBIN WALL KIMMERER

“I give daily thanks for Robin Wall Kimmerer for being a font of endless knowledge, both mental and spiritual.”

~ Richard Powers, *New York Times*

As a botanist, Robin Wall Kimmerer has been trained to ask questions of nature with the tools of science. As a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, she embraces the notion that plants and animals are our oldest teachers. In *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, Kimmerer



brings these two lenses of knowledge together to take us on “a journey that is every bit as mythic as it is scientific, as sacred as it is historical, as clever as it is wise” (Elizabeth Gilbert).

Braiding Sweetgrass weaves together a central argument: that the awakening of a wider ecological consciousness requires the acknowledgment and celebration of our reciprocal relationship with the rest of the living world.

This special ticketed event is presented in partnership with For Love of Water (FLOW), a nonprofit dedicated to protecting and preserving the Great Lakes. Half of the proceeds from our ticket sales will go to FLOW to support their mission.

Welcome to Chairman David M. Arroyo of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians for a blessing at the beginning of our event, and the Botanic Garden at Historic Barns Park as a community partner.

GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY

Event Sponsor:
GRAND TRAVERSE REGIONAL COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

This event is made possible in part by a grant from the Michigan Humanities, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Guest Host
MATTHEW L.M. FLETCHER

Fletcher is Foundation Professor of Law at Michigan State University College of Law and Director of the Indigenous Law and Policy Center. He is a frequent instructor at the Pre-Law Summer Institute for American Indian students. He sits as the Chief Justice of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians Supreme Court and also sits as an appellate judge for nine other tribes. He is a member of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians.



JUNE 24, 7PM • FREE Virtual Event (\$10 donation suggested)

EMILY HENRY

“Emily Henry's new book is the perfect getaway: a heartfelt, funny, tender escape that you wish could last forever.”

~ Jodi Picoult, bestselling author

Emily Henry, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Beach Read*, offers a sparkling new novel perfect for summertime in Traverse City. Named a Most Anticipated Book of 2021 by *Newsweek*, *Oprah Magazine*, *Marie Claire*, *Parade*, *Good Housekeeping*, and more, *People We Meet on Vacation* will leave you with the warm, hazy afterglow usually reserved for the best vacations.



Poppy and Alex. Alex and Poppy. They have nothing in common. She's a wild child; he wears khakis. She has insatiable wanderlust; he prefers to stay home with a book. And somehow, ever since a fateful

car share home from college many years ago, they are the very best of friends. For most of the year they live far apart—she's in New York City, and he's in their small hometown—but every summer, for a decade, they have taken one glorious week of vacation together.

Until two years ago, when they ruined everything. They haven't spoken since.

Poppy has everything she should want, but she's stuck in a rut. When someone asks when she was last truly happy, she knows, without a doubt, it was on that ill-fated, final trip with Alex. And so, she decides to convince her best friend to take one more vacation together—lay everything on the table, make it all right. Miraculously, he agrees. Now she has a week to fix everything.

We are pleased to welcome Creative Coast, an initiative powered by Traverse Connect, as the Community Partner.

Guest Host
BRITTANY CAVALLARO

Cavallaro is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the Charlotte Holmes novels and *Muse*. With Emily Henry, she is the author of *Hello Girls*. A recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, she received her MFA in creative writing from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and her PhD in English literature from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Currently, she teaches creative writing at the Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan.



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Jen Sincero & enthusiastic fans: 2018



Nikki Giovanni : 2017



Lucy Kalanithi: 2016



Mitch Albom : 2011



Harlan Coben receives the key to the city: 2015



Diana Gabaldon: 2014



Creative writing class field trip: 2013



Terry McDonnell: 2017



Lisa Scottoline & Scholarship winners 2019



WE WILL BE BACK - STAY WELL!

DAX-DEVLON ROSS

“(A) deeply intimate and often searing account... It’s a must read coming-of-age story for our times.”

~ Elsa Walsh, journalist & bestselling author

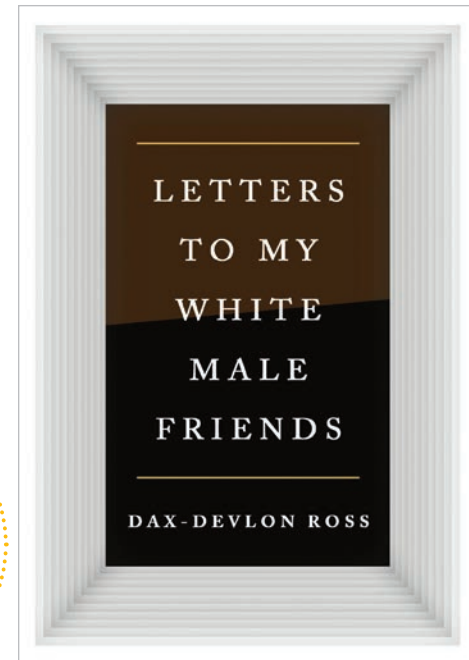
Dax-Devlon Ross has led a career as an educator, non-profit executive, equity consultant, and journalist.



After receiving his J.D. from George Washington University, he joined New York City Teaching Fellows. He is the founding Executive Director of After-School All-Stars in New York and New Jersey, and was the winner of the National Association of Black Journalists’ Investigative Reporting Award. Currently he is a fellow at Type Media Center.

In his latest book, *Letters to My White Male Friends*, Ross speaks directly to the millions of people who are suddenly awakening to the ways racism warps us all. Ross helps readers understand what it meant to be America’s first generation raised after the civil rights era. He explains how we were all educated with colorblind narratives and symbols that typically, albeit implicitly, privileged whiteness and denigrated Blackness. He provides the context and color of his own experiences in white schools so that readers can revisit moments in their lives where racism was in the room even when they didn’t see it enter. Ross shows how learning to see the harm that racism did to him, and forgiving himself, gave him the empathy to see the harm it does to white people as well.

Ultimately, Ross offers direction so that we can take just action in the workplace, community, family, and, most importantly, in ourselves,



especially in the future when race is no longer in the spotlight.

This event is presented in partnership with Northern Michigan E3, an antiracism taskforce that seeks to educate, elevate, and engage.

Guest Host COURTNEY WIGGINS

Wiggins is a community organizer, healer, and founding councilmember of Northern Michigan E3: Educate, Elevate, and Engage. They are actively working to eradicate racism and build a regional movement toward racial justice and collective liberation through education, elevation, and engagement that is BIPOC-led and BIPOC-centered. In addition to racial justice work, Courtney is a certified vibrational sound therapist, herbal tea maker and parent to a wonderful nearly ten-year-old. (BIPOC - Black, Indigenous, and People of Color)



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RARE BIRD BREWPUB

MEGAN MIRANDA

“Agatha Christie fans will welcome this 21st-century update on the classic golden age village mystery.”

~ Publishers Weekly

Megan Miranda

is the *New York Times* bestselling author of *All the Missing Girls*, *The Perfect Stranger*, *The Last House Guest*, a Reese

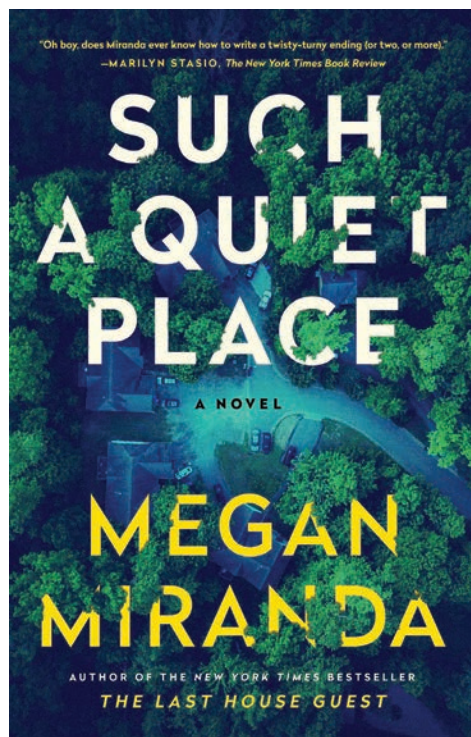
Witherspoon Book Club pick, and *The Girl from Widow Hills*. Miranda returns to the virtual stage with the National Writers Series after hosting our 2020 event with Ruth Ware.

Such a Quiet Place is her riveting new suspense novel about a mysterious murder in an idyllic and close-knit neighborhood.

Hollow's Edge used to be a quiet place. A private and peaceful neighborhood where neighbors dropped in on neighbors, celebrated graduation and holiday parties together, and looked out for one another.

But then came the murder of Brandon and Fiona Truett. A year and a half later, Hollow's Edge is simmering. The residents are trapped, unable to sell their homes, confronted daily by the empty Truett house, and suffocated by their trial testimonies that implicated one of their own, Ruby Fletcher. And now, Ruby's back.

Pulsating with suspense and with the shocking twists that are Megan Miranda's trademark, *Such a Quiet Place* is her best novel yet—a twisty locked-box thriller that will keep you turning pages late into the night.



Guest Host RILEY SAGER

Sager is the pseudonym of a former journalist, editor, and graphic designer.

Riley's first novel, *Final Girls*, was a national and international bestseller that has been published in more than two dozen countries and won the ITW Thriller Award for Best Hardcover Novel. Sager's subsequent novels *The Last Time I Lied*, *Lock Every Door*, and *Home Before Dark*, which received the Crimson Scribe Award by *Suspense Magazine*, were *New York Times* bestsellers. *Survive the Night* (2021) is Riley's fifth thriller.



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RAISING THE LITERARY BAR SINCE 2010

- NWS broadcasts author events on IPR, Community Access Television, YouTube, and makes them available to public radio stations around the country. The NWS virtual events are available on our website.
- More than 69,000 people have attended events since we started.
- Awarded \$56,000 in scholarships to 38 collegebound students.
- We've hosted more than 180 authors for onstage conversations over the past 10 years.
- Our Raising Writers programs offer creative writing opportunities that engage kids from ages 9-18 throughout northern Michigan.
- Sixty-two teams engaged in a creative and fun Battle of the Books this year. This year 355 students were quizzed on nine books.
- Each spring, we've hosted poetry workshops at Traverse Heights and Blair Elementary schools. This year, the poetry workshops were held virtually.
- NWS creates and promotes youth creative writing classes in partnership with Northwestern Michigan College.
- Each spring, we publish the annual *National Writers Series Literary Journal*, which includes student writing from Front Street Writers, poetry workshops, and NMC creative writing classes.

KUDOS to NWS

"I had a most wonderful experience speaking virtually at the NWS—this is a passionate organization that cares deeply about the arts. As a writer, I couldn't be more grateful that the NWS exists."

~ Imbolo Mbue, *How Beautiful We Were*



"Traverse City wrung my tired soul out. I got a chance to spend some time with the young writers of tomorrow, part of the National Writers Series, and then I read in the magnificent old Opera House. All the ghosts of the past and the voices of the future in one very special place."

~ Colum McCann, *TransAtlantic*

AUGUST 5, 7PM • FREE Virtual Event (\$10 donation suggested)

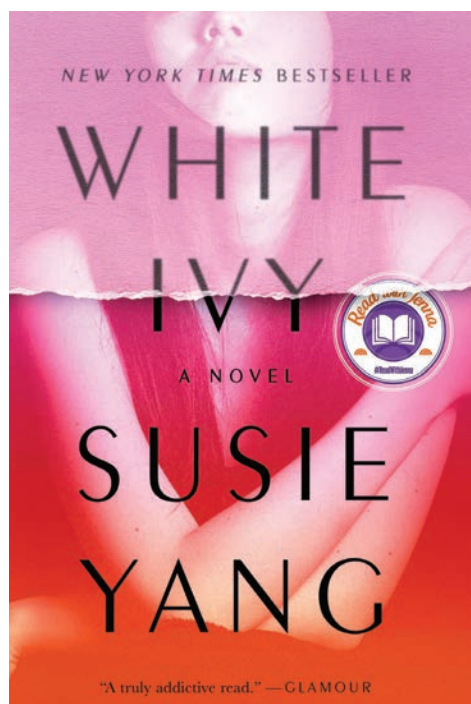
SUSIE YANG

“Memorable... compelling... heart-wrenching... a welcome addition to the literature on immigration told by an author who understands the issue like few others.”

~ Kirkus Reviews

Named one of the Best Books of 2020 by *USA Today* and longlisted for the Center for Fiction's First Novel Prize, Susie Yang's *New York Times* bestselling novel and Read with Jenna Today Show Book Club Pick, *White Ivy*, is filled with surprising twists and a nuanced exploration of class and race.

Ivy Lin is a thief and a liar—but you'd never know it by looking at her. Ivy's



immigrant grandmother relies on Ivy's mild appearance for cover as she teaches her granddaughter how to pilfer items from yard sales and second-hand shops. Thieving allows Ivy to accumulate the trappings of a

suburban teen—and, most importantly, to attract the attention of Gideon Speyer, the golden boy of a wealthy political family. But when Ivy's mother discovers her trespasses, punishment is swift and Ivy is sent to China, and her dream instantly evaporates.

Years later, Ivy has grown into a poised yet restless young woman, haunted by her conflicting feelings about her upbringing and her family. Back in the U.S., when Ivy bumps into Sylvia Speyer, Gideon's sister, a reconnection with Gideon is inevitable. But just as Ivy is about to have everything she's ever wanted, a ghost from her past resurfaces, threatening the nearly perfect life she's worked so hard to build.

Susie Yang was born in China and came to the United States as a child. After receiving her doctorate of pharmacy from Rutgers, she launched a tech startup in San Francisco that has taught 20,000 people how to code. She has lived across the United States, Europe, and Asia.

We are pleased to welcome The Good Bowl as our community partner.

Guest Host AARTI SHAHANI

Shahani is an award-winning NPR journalist and best-selling author. She is creator and host of Art of Power (a co-production with WBEZ), a weekly podcast featuring fascinating people who've done big things. Aarti's first book, *Here We Are* (an NWS book!), chronicles her unlikely journey from undocumented kid in Queens, New York to national voice on the frontlines of the most powerful industry on earth. An Amazon bestseller, the memoir has garnered critical acclaim.



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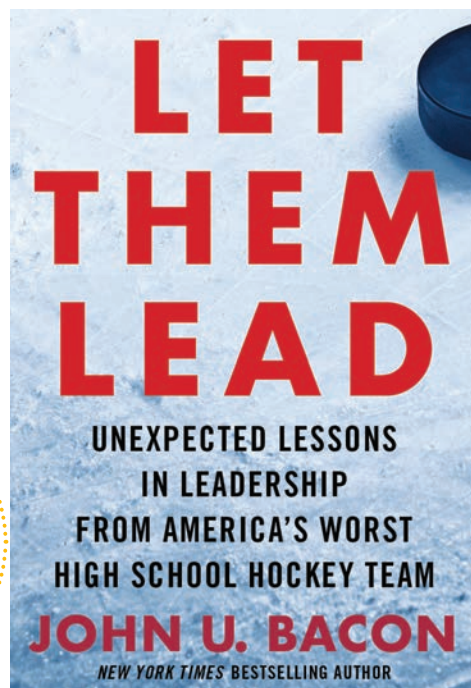
AUGUST 26, 7PM • CITY OPERA HOUSE • WE'RE BACK!

JOHN U. BACON

NWS Friends, we are so excited to have this event be our first in-person event back at the City Opera House. A livestream option will also be available. Rest assured that virtually or in person, you will get to enjoy John U. Bacon's amazing new book!

When John U. Bacon played for the Ann Arbor Huron High School River Rats, he never scored a goal.

Yet somehow, years later he found himself leading his alma mater's downtrodden program. How bad? The team hadn't won a game in over a year, making them the nation's worst squad—a fact they celebrated. With almost everyone



expecting more failure, Bacon made it special to play for Huron by making it hard, which inspired the players to excel. Then he defied conventional wisdom again by putting the players in charge of team discipline, goal-

setting, and even decision-making—and it worked. In just three seasons the River Rats bypassed 95-percent of the nation's teams.

A true story filled with unforgettable characters, stories, and lessons that apply to organizations everywhere, *Let Them Lead* includes the leader's mistakes and the reactions of the players, who have since achieved great success as leaders themselves. *Let Them Lead* is a fast-paced, feel-good book that leaders of all kinds can embrace to motivate their teams to work harder, work together, and take responsibility for their own success.

John U. Bacon has written for *Time*, the *New York Times*, and *ESPN Magazine*, among other publications, earning national honors. He is the author of several books on sports and business, including *Bo's Lasting Lessons* (with Bo Schembechler), a *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* business bestseller. Bacon teaches at the University of Michigan and is a popular public speaker.

Please welcome Centre Ice Arena as the Community Partner.

Guest Host DOUG STANTON

Doug Stanton is a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author and cofounder of the National Writers Series. Stanton is the author of *In Harm's Way* and *Horse Soldiers*. His writing has appeared in *Esquire*, *The New York Times*, *TIME*, the *Washington Post*, and other national publications where he has been a contributing editor. Stanton attended Interlochen Arts Academy, Hampshire College, and received an MFA from the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa. He lives in Michigan with his wife, Anne, and their children.



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MIHumanities

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Special Thanks to our Summer Gala Hosts

2021

Aurora Cellars

2020

Virtual Gala with Susan Goldberg editor National Geographic

2019

Mission Table Restaurant with Hosts Terry & Wayne Lobdell

2018

Olivia & Marty Lagina

2017

Dana & Casey Cowell

2016

Brenda & Ross Biederman Susie & Bill Janis Susie & Bob Kuras Diana & Richard Milock

2015

Anne & Robert Tucker

James & Diana Huckle
Lola Jackson & Dilys
Tosteson Garcia
Bill & Susie Janis
Angie Judge
Jamie & Paula Kemler
Paul & Carol Laporte
Harold & Pamela Lassers
Wayne & Terry Lobdell
Janice & Michael London
Kathy Magliochetti
John & Mary Melvin
Anonymous
Richard & Diana Milock
Anne Montgomery
Shirley & Dick Murray
Dawn & Kean Oh
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Vicki Stanton
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Pam Fletcher
Kent & Nancy Walton
Karen & Jack Williams
Janet Wolf

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