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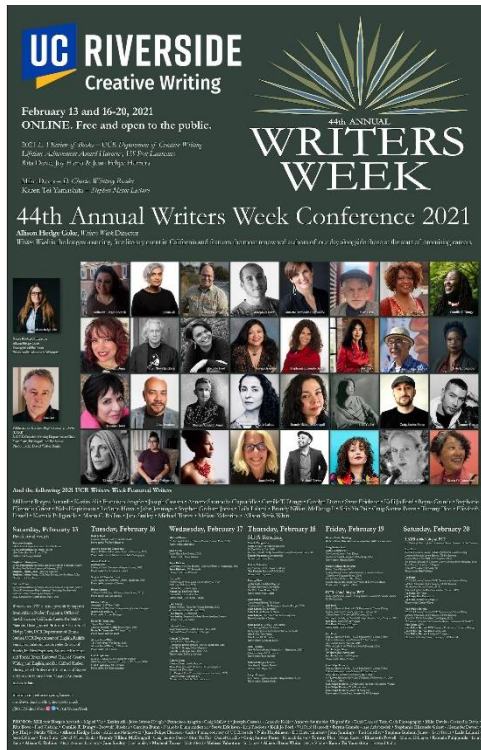
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UC Riverside’s 44th-annual Writers Week goes virtual
California’s longest-running free literary festival is now accessible to audiences worldwide

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For the 44th year, the University of California, Riverside will host [Writers Week](#), California’s longest-running free literary event, on Feb. 13 and Feb. 16-19, 2021. The event will honor three U.S. Poet Laureates and present 32 writers over 16 sessions, the most writers featured since the event’s inception. But what makes this year truly unique is that for the first time in its history, Writers Week will be completely virtual.

The ongoing shutdown of UC Riverside due to COVID-19 was the catalyst for transitioning to a virtual format, but doing so has made the event available far beyond the university campus community, Inland Empire and general audience in Southern California who attend annually. The new platform has also allowed for a diverse slate of authors to perform in the event from all around the country and for greater California and national and international attendees to enjoy from the comfort and safety of their home.



“In moving online, we had an opportunity to bridge the gap between the beloved live face-to-face regional event and what is possible with virtual presentation,” said Allison Hedge Coke, distinguished professor of creative writing and director of Writers Week. “Faced with the pandemic, we blossomed and quickly moved to do what we do best in presenting fascinating writers from various genres and representing both debut and seasoned, nationally and internationally recognized voices in an up-close and personal intimate forum — all for free.”

Writers Week will be presented on the video platform Crowdcast allowing for a capacity of over 1000 attendees during each session and audience interaction during live Q&A’s. A Facebook Live and YouTube Live will also be broadcast simultaneously. In order to be fully accessible this year, live video captioning and ASL captioning will also be implemented. This online presentation will continue in the years ahead even as in-person events resume, bringing Writers Week to the scale of what many national and international book festivals offer, Hedge Coke said.

Headlining the event are U.S. Poet Laureates Rita Dove, Joy Harjo, and Juan Felipe Herrera, who will each be honored with the annual Los Angeles Review of Books (LARB) - UCR

Department of Creative Writing Lifetime Achievement Award during a special closing event at 6:30 p.m. on Feb. 19. This is the first time there have been three honorees receiving this award.

“The legacy of these three laureates is incredible,” Hedge Coke said, noting each poet has published award-winning books of poetry for over 40 years. “This luminary trifecta served as the first African American, the first Latinx, and first tribally enrolled citizen of a Native nation appointed as U.S. Poet Laureates, the highest honor for a poet in the United States. Their work for greater good, in providing light to ease troubles, in their generous and great mentorship outreach, and gracious literary presence in shaping the way we view ideals in democracy are represented in their careers and in their compendiums. It is a phenomenal opportunity for us to acknowledge their gifts to our canon and to the world.”

Also featured as this year’s D. Charles Whitney Reader is 2020 Lannan Cultural Freedom Prize winner and UCR Emeritus Professor Mike Davis, who will be reading Feb. 18 at 3:30 p.m. with creative writing professor Laila Lalami. Lalami was recently heralded as a “great immigrant” by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and has received numerous awards, including the Hurston Wright Legacy Award and the 2019 Simpson/Joyce Carol Oates Prize for her body of work.

“Davis is a superpower, deeply engaged in the investigation of labor, widely indicting injustices and practices of the political sphere and contradictions and collusion in pandemics and capitalism, translating our times into malleable materials for contemplation and education,” Hedge Coke said.

American Book Award and California Book Award winner Katen Tei Yamashita is this year’s Stephen Minot Lecturer, and will be reading with UCR professors Nalo Hopkinson, who was recently named 37th Damon Knight Grand Master by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America; and Allison Benis White, a recent University of North Texas Rilke Prize Winner, at 6:30 p.m. on Feb 16.

“She has delivered an impeccable compendium of essential work,” Hedge Coke said of Yamashita. “Her offerings take us through tumultuous times and journeys of Japanese immigrant experience, American pop culture, and Japanese traditions.”

Other writers featured in Writers Week include Millicent Borges Accardi, Kazim Ali, Francisco Aragón, Joseph Cassara, Annette Saunooke Clapsaddle, Camille T. Dundy, Carolyn Dunn, Steve Erickson, Kelli Jo Ford, Reyna Grande, Stephanie Elizondo Griest, LeAnne Howe, John Jennings, Stephen Graham Jones, Brandy Nālani McDougall, Shin Yu Pai, Craig Santos Perez, Tommy Pico, Elizabeth Powell, Kamala Puligandla, Alison C. Rollins, Jane Smiley, Michael Torres, and Melissa Valentine.

Each session will begin with a welcome and an introduction, followed by each writer reading from their latest works. A virtual live Q&A will follow each reading, allowing audience members to ask the speakers questions. Also featured are an MFA reading and UCR’s Writers Resist Reading.

“We have some of the nation’s leading fiction writers, novelists, essayists, biographers, memoirists, and poets, and have built a platform that is prepared to have massive attendance to serve UCR and beyond,” Hedge Coke said. “We also have a scene performance from a brand-new play and a talk about work from a film in-progress by two participating directors.”

All events are free and open to the public. Advanced registration is required through the Writers Week website. Each session in the [schedule](#) links directly to Crowdcast, where attendees can place reservations and return day-of for the event.

[A special ticketed post-festival celebration](#) will be hosted by the Los Angeles Review of Books the evening of Feb. 20 featuring Lifetime Achievement honorees Rita Dove, Joy Harjo, and Juan Felipe Herrera.

All presenting authors’ books are available to purchase online through UCR’s campus Barnes and Noble bookstore and Cellar Door Bookstore.

Find more information and register for events at writersweek.ucr.edu.