

The New Orleans Book Festival at Tulane reveals best-selling authors for inaugural 2020 lineup

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Tulane University President Mike Fitts (center) announces the 2020 New Orleans Book Festival at Tulane University, which will be held March 19 - 21. On stage with President Fitts, from left, are festival co-chair and Tulane University Professor of History Walter Isaacson, festival co-chair and former New Orleans first lady Cheryl Landrieu, and Emily Wolff, director of the Office of Youth and Families for the city of New Orleans. (Photo by Sally Asher)

The 2020 New Orleans Book Festival at Tulane University, a new major literary event for the Crescent City, will take place March 19-21, with a lineup featuring best-selling authors including Jason Berry, Roy Blount Jr., Donna L. Brazile, David Brooks, Sarah M. Broom, Mika Brzezinski, Jean Case, Steve Case, Dave Eggers, Malcolm

Gladwell, Eddie Glaude, Annette Gordon-Reed, John Grisham, Mitch Landrieu, Erik Larson, Michael Lewis, Eric Motley, Peter S. Onuf, Samantha Power, Sister Helen Prejean, Susan Rice, Joe Scarborough, Alon Shaya, Anne Snyder, Evan Thomas, Sean Tuohy, Kim Vaz-Deville and Darren Walker.

The three-day event will showcase nearly 100 national, regional and local authors; feature children's and family programming sponsored by the Scholastic Corporation; and include numerous literary exhibitors. Festival organizers are expecting more than 30,000 attendees. All events will take place on Tulane's uptown campus, including the Lavin-Bernick Center for University Life, McAlister Auditorium, Freeman Auditorium, Rogers Memorial Chapel and the Berger Family Lawn.

At a press conference announcing the event, Tulane President Mike Fitts said the university has a "rich, renowned and vibrant literacy history."

"It is Tulane's great honor to host a festival that brings together the world's leading authors, book lovers of all genres and the children of our community," President Fitts said. "Events like this make our campus and the Tulane experience available to everyone, especially the young minds and aspiring writers of New Orleans."

"Expanding literacy, the love of the written word, and the ability to express and articulate humanity's most sublime thoughts and discoveries and aspirations, that's the central role of higher education; that's what we're about at Tulane University," he said.

The festival will spotlight eight tracks, including American Society, Health and Science, Food, New Orleans Culture, Sports, Children, Fiction and World War II in partnership with The National WWII Museum. There will be panel discussions, moderated conversations, keynote lectures, book fairs and workshops. Each day will include at least one major plenary session at which a leading author will be featured. It will also provide a forum for media outlets, authors and readers to network and collaborate in one of the most vibrant and culturally diverse cities in the world.

Family Day at the Festival on Saturday, March 21, will focus on literacy advancement and feature readings and special literacy-themed activities for New Orleans children and their families. Family Day is a joint partnership with the city of New Orleans' Office of Youth and Families and Scholastic.

“This will be an opportunity for youth-serving organizations, our libraries, our recreation centers, and other nonprofits throughout the community to come here on campus and to have a day filled with family fun. But we hope that it will not just be the one day, but really extend out into our families’ experiences beyond the weekend, because there really is so much in our city to be enjoyed, and our mayor is committed to ensuring that all families have access to that,” Emily Wolff, director of the Office of Youth and Families, said.

Wolff said the event is an opportunity to also raise awareness about the city’s high rate of adult illiteracy and provide more resources to support that issue.

The festival will engage with teachers and school organizations, as well as literacy, child advocacy and city partners, to encourage attendance and participation in the festival. In addition, thousands of books will be distributed to local schools before the festival, as well as to many of the children attending the event. Prior to the event, Scholastic will announce the children’s authors that will participate at the festival.

The festival co-chairs are former New Orleans first lady Cheryl Landrieu and Tulane University Professor of History and best-selling biographer Walter Isaacson. Landrieu is the founder of the New Orleans Book Festival and has a long history of supporting strategic community initiatives in New Orleans, most recently focused on literacy and advocacy for the advancement of women and girls.

Isaacson is the past CEO of the Aspen Institute, where he is now a Distinguished Fellow, the former chairman of CNN and the former editor of TIME magazine. He is currently an advisory partner at Perella Weinberg, a financial services firm based in New York City.

“The New Orleans Book Festival began in 2010 as a free literary event for families in New Orleans,” said Landrieu. “We are excited to expand in partnership with Tulane University to create a weekend of events featuring prominent national and local writers and journalists. The city of New Orleans has a strong literary history, and this festival seeks to continue and grow the literary community in our area. The partnership with Tulane will also generate participation of a great number of talented writers from the Tulane community as well as interest from Tulane students. The New Orleans Book Festival will offer something to readers of all ages and backgrounds and will provide an opportunity for all members of our community

to come together over a shared love of reading.”

Landrieu said she remembered being nervous about the first book festival, hosted at Milton Latter Memorial Library, but when she arrived, she saw the long line of children waiting.

“Just to see the excitement in their eyes that day made me realize that this is something that could continue.”

“As an author, I noticed that so many cities around the country have major book festivals,” Isaacson said. “I love all the festivals in New Orleans, but it seemed to me that somewhere in the cultural calendar between food and wine and jazz, it would be fun to do a major literary and ideas festival. The New Orleans Book Festival at Tulane University has a tremendous lineup for our first year, including some of the country’s most notable authors from a vast array of genres and disciplines. Our expectation is to bring leading authors from around the country, the city and campus, and make this one of the nation’s premier literary events. We hope to attract and captivate book enthusiasts from all over, especially in New Orleans, for a three-day celebration of literacy and culture.”

The full list of confirmed authors who will present during the festival includes Iñaki Alday, Jason Berry, Roy Blount Jr., Beau Boudreaux, Donna L. Brazile, David Brooks, Sarah M. Broom, Jill Conner Browne, Mika Brzezinski, Richard Campanella, Jean Case, Steve Case, Dave Eggers, Emma Fick, Malcolm Gladwell, Eddie Glaude, Annette Gordon-Reed, Richard Grant, Roberta Brandes Gratz, John Grisham, Yuri Herrera, Margarita Jover, Molly Kimball, Mitch Landrieu, Erik Larson, Nancy Lemann, Nick Lemann, Michael Lewis, Eric Motley, Peter S. Onuf, Tom Piazza, Lawrence N. Powell, Samantha Power, Sister Helen Prejean, Carol McMichael Reese, Susan Rice, Joe Scarborough, Alon Shaya, Anne Snyder, Michael Strecker, Evan Thomas, Sean Tuohy, Sheba Turk, Mark VanLandingham, Kim Vaz-Deville, Darren Walker, Henry Walther and Chris Yandle.

In addition to contemporary authors such as Tulane Professor of English Jesmyn Ward, a two-time National Book Award winner, New Orleans boasts a long list of authors with strong ties to the city. From William Faulkner, Tennessee Williams and Anne Rice to Tulane alumnus and Pulitzer Prize winner John Kennedy Toole, many authors have found their creativity and brilliance in the Crescent City.

Tulane's own faculty have penned best-selling novels, histories and biographies and works on subjects ranging from ancient civilizations to the geography of New Orleans and the history of jazz.

Additional authors for the book festival will be announced in the coming months.

[Click here to see photos from the event.](#) For more information on the New Orleans Book Festival at Tulane University, please visit www.bookfest.Tulane.edu and follow along on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram @NolaBookFest.