

The New Mexico Writer

*A publication of New Mexico Writers
Supporting and connecting the literary community*

November 2025

Noted Novelist and Poet Jennifer Givhan to Headline 2026 New Mexico Writers Annual Dinner

Mexican American and Indigenous poet and novelist Jennifer Givhan will speak at the 2026 New Mexico Writers Annual Dinner at La Fonda on the Plaza on April 30.

Givhan's latest novel, *Salt Bones* (Mulholland/Little, Brown, 2025), recently appeared on *Publishers Weekly's* Best Books of 2025 list in the Mystery/Thriller category. NMW Board Member Deborah Jackson Taffa described this book as "the perfect blend of political horror and other-worldly nightmares." Two of Givhan's earlier novels—*Trinity Sight* and *Jubilee*—were finalists for the Arizona-New Mexico Book Awards, and *Trinity Sight* received the 2020 Southwest Book Award. She is also the author of five poetry collections, including *Belly to the Brutal* (Wesleyan University Press, 2022).



Givhan's work is known for its exploration of magical realism and surrealism, the dark supernatural, and motherhood. "I write about the violence against women and mothers on the border," she says, "but also about the resilience and strength we women and mothers evince every day of our lives."

Her honors include a poetry fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, a PEN/Rosenthal Emerging Voices Fellowship, and the Frost Place Latinx Scholarship. She was the 2024 Visiting Professor of Creative Writing at The University of New Mexico, and she lives and writes in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Look for more details on the NMW Annual Dinner and how to reserve tickets in future issues of *The New Mexico Writer*.

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Hundreds Celebrate Local Authors at Inaugural Southern New Mexico Book Festival



More than 800 attendees and 60 authors and vendors celebrated New Mexican literature at the inaugural Southern New Mexico Book Festival, which took place at Doña Ana Community College's East Mesa Campus in Las Cruces on October 11.

Festival-goers were able to attend more than a dozen author readings, as well as numerous workshops on topics ranging from researching historical novels to building

miniature bookcases. Younger festival-goers, too, had plenty to do; the Vamos Niños mobile children's museum offered "STEAM-powered exhibits," and the Children's Reading Alliance distributed more than 200 free children's books. Local authors were on-hand throughout the day to sell copies of their books, as were several New Mexico—and West Texas—based organizations, including Colorful Chapters Bookstore, the Doña Ana Community College Library, and the New Mexico Book Association.

New Mexico Writers, which recently announced the results of the New Mexico Book Awards, displayed winning and finalist titles from Southern New Mexico authors and other authors attending the festival. In addition to these newly honored books, the organization's table included books by NMW board members, and NMW staff shared information about the grant program, Rising Writers, the upcoming Annual Dinner at La Fonda on the Plaza, and more.

The festival was organized by a planning committee that included several members of Las Cruces Writers, a local group that operates under the tagline "Writers Helping Writers," as well as Liz Vega, the event manager for Visit Las Cruces. "The original idea came about from an event the Las Cruces Writers hosted with the Friends of the Thomas Branigan Memorial Library called 'Celebrate Authors' or 'Celebration of Authors' in different decade-long iterations," said Vega. "One of the planning members—local author George Pintar—of that event came to me in early 2024 with the idea to morph the event into something bigger for the community and the region at large."

The 2025 festival did indeed serve both the Las Cruces community and the larger region, drawing in hundreds over the course of the day from Southern New Mexico, West Texas, and beyond. And, while this was the Southern New Mexico Book Festival's first year, Las Cruces is not unfamiliar with book festivals; the annual Border Book Festival, which was founded in 1995, ran in Mesilla and Las Cruces for twenty years before its closure in 2015. Fittingly, the Southern New Mexico Book Festival's closing reception featured a discussion by the Border Book Festival's cofounder, local literary legend Denise Chávez.

Meanwhile, the festival's organizers are already looking ahead to next year. Plans are "still in the works," Vega said—but she hopes the Southern New Mexico Book Festival will be an annual event every fall.

A Q&A with Paul Rhetts Award-Winner Vaunda Micheaux Nelson

Vaunda Micheaux Nelson recently received the inaugural Paul Rhetts Award from the New Mexico Book Awards for her middle-grade novel in verse, *Radiant*, which follows fifth-grader Cooper Dale as she navigates her primarily white Pittsburgh community in 1963. Nelson's previous work has received many honors, including the Coretta Scott King Award and the WWA Spur Award. *The New Mexico Writer* recently had the opportunity to ask Nelson about *Radiant*, the Paul Rhetts Award, and her experience as a New Mexico writer. This interview has been edited for concision.



What does it mean to you to have received the inaugural Paul Rhetts Award—for the most highly rated book in the 2025 New Mexico Book Awards—for *Radiant*?

It is truly a gift. Paul Rhetts (and his late wife, Barbe Awalt) have supported New Mexico authors and readers for decades through LPD Press and Rio Grande Books, through founding the New Mexico Book Awards, and through the New Mexico Book Co-op. I have been honored with New Mexico Book Awards in the past, even receiving Best-in-Show one year. All have been wonderful, but there's something extra special about being the very first Paul Rhetts Award recipient. My heart is full.

What were some of the rewards and challenges of writing a novel in verse?

Writing *Radiant* was scary and wonderful. I fell in love with the format in 1990 when I read my very first verse novel—*Judy Scuppernong* by Brenda Seabrooke. I never imagined I could write one myself but was intrigued by the challenge and curious to see what I could do with it.

Finding that not-too-much, just-enough, sweet spot was challenging at times, and making decisions about the order of things, where particular poems should fall in the story, was hard. Spacing and line breaks—things I never needed to consider when writing prose—were rather perplexing. But I liked trying something different, entering an intimidating, yet exciting, new way to tell a story.

I enjoy novels that leave lots of space for readers to fill in the blanks in their own ways. I love the subtlety, the power in what isn't said or spelled out. By its very nature, this is what poetry does and is. It was a marvelous journey.

Read the full Q&A—in which Nelson discusses her work as a youth services librarian, her favorite ways to engage in the local writing community, and what being a New Mexico writer means to her—on the New Mexico Writers website [here](#).

NM Writers Celebrates the Winners & Finalists of the 2025 NM Book Awards

It's been a little over a month since NM Writers announced the results of the 2025 New Mexico Book Awards. A complete list of the winners and finalists can be found [here](#). Lisa McCoy, director of the NM Book Awards, was in person at four events around



the state where winners and finalists could pick up their WINNER or FINALIST stickers. Stickers not picked up will be mailed and additional quantities of stickers will be available for purchase soon. Keep an eye out for these bright red and blue stickers to show up on the winning and finalist books sold in bookstores near you.

NM Writers is planning publicity events around the state for the 2025 honorees, and McCoy is working with local bookstores to display winning and finalist books and to host author events. The following NM Book Awards publicity events are scheduled for November:

- November 22 at 1 p.m. at Avalon Books and Music in Silver City. Featured winners are Marty Eberhardt, Jay Hemphill, Linda Brewer, and Sharman Apt Russell.
- November 23 at 3 p.m. at Books on the Bosque in Albuquerque. Featured winners are Ana Romero with *The Cuentistas: Our Stories*; Vaunda Micheaux Nelson with *Radiant*; Korie Leigh, Ph.D. with *What Does Grief Feel Like?*; Laurel Goodluck with *Too Much, My Great Big Native Family, Rock Your Mocs*, and *She Persisted: Deb Haaland*; and Khadijah VanBrakle with *Fatima Tate Takes the Cake*.



Look for details on other events for this year and next in future issues of *The New Mexico Writer*.

***Pasatiempo* Writing Contest Now Accepting Entries Statewide**

The annual *Pasatiempo* Writing Contest is open for submissions through November 14. This is the first year that residents throughout the state of New Mexico are eligible to enter, and the contest now accepts up to five entries per individual.

The categories are Fiction (1,200 words max), judged by NMW Board Member Deborah Jackson Taffa; Nonfiction/Essay/Memoir (1,200 words max), judged by Caroline Fraser; and Poetry (40 lines max), judged by 2022-2025 New Mexico Poet Laureate Lauren Camp. Bestselling mystery writer Anne Hillerman will judge the Grand Prize, choosing from the category judges' top selections.

Winning entries will be published in *Pasatiempo* on December 19. Learn more [here](#).

New Literary Arts Fund to Support Literary Nonprofits

Last week, a coalition of seven charitable foundations, including the Santa Fe-based Lannan Foundation, announced the launch of the Literary Arts Fund. This fund, initiated

by the Mellon Foundation, plans to distribute at least \$50 million over the next five years to US-based nonprofit or fiscally sponsored literary organizations and publishers in an effort “to dramatically boost the essential yet critically underfunded nonprofit literary arts field in the United States.” The fund will begin accepting grant applications on November 10, and more information is available [here](#).

New Mexico Writers Grantee News



2024 NMW Grantee **Dena Moes**, author of *It's Your Body*, received the National Media Award from the American College of Nurse-Midwives.

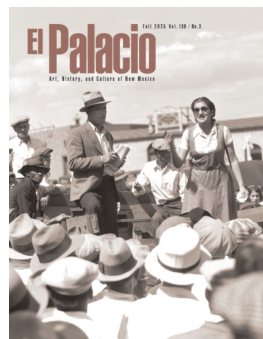


2022 NMW Grantee and Board Member **Zahra Marwan** joined DelSheree Gladden on the podcast *Write On Four Corners* to talk about her visit to Farmington as part of the NMW Rising Writers series. Listen [here](#).



2020 NMW Grantee **Emily Withnall**'s “Creating Art in a Burning World: Reckoning with New Mexico's Largest Wildfire,” published by *After the Art*, is a notable essay in the *Best American Essays 2025* anthology, edited by Jia Tolentino.

Briefly Noted



El Palacio, the flagship magazine of the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs, received seven awards at the



Minrose Gwin's *Beautiful Dreamers* was named a *Foreword Review* INDIES Book of the Year, and her manuscript

International Regional Media Association (IRMA) conference in Calgary, Canada—including two Gold Awards and recognition as a finalist for Magazine of the Year.

Dr. Frances Levine discussed *Crossings: Women on the Santa Fe Trail*, in conversation with Kate Nelson, at the New Mexico History Museum in October.

In collaboration with the New Mexico Book Association, Garcia Street Books welcomed Benjamin Green and Scott Arthur Jones to its Meet the Authors event on November 1.

J N Crain announced the publication of *Ysobel*, which received a five-star review from Readers' Favorite.

Angela Wilson was interviewed on the ABC morning show *Good Morning Texas* about her debut novel *White Dan for 200*.

Nina Amir announced the forthcoming publication of *Change the World One Book At a Time* in January 2026.

The Little Rescue won the Faulkner Wisdom Competition for a novel in progress.

Enrique R. Lamadrid's *Hearts in Motion, Hearts in Place: The Quest for Querencias on Turtle Island and Abya Yala* received a review in *Pasatiempo*.

Mary Oishi wrote about *Poetry in Dangerous Times* by Demetria Martínez and Susan Sherman in *LesbianEarth*.

Daniel Debs Nossiter announced the publication of *Devil Take It* in Ireland and the UK by Mercier Press.

The podcast *Write On Four Corners* featured Suzanne Stauffer and Jane Bauer in October.

The *Las Cruces Bulletin* reported that Charmayne Samuelson was recognized by the New Mexico Book Awards in five categories.

Jeanne Lyet Gassman announced the inclusion of her flash fiction piece "Time" in the anthology *Buyers' Remorse*.

Send Us Your News!

Having a book or article published? Doing a reading? Offering a workshop? Let us know, so we can share your news with other writers. We're particularly interested to hear from New Mexico and greater Navajo Nation writers. [Drop us a line](#).

Upcoming Events

November 6 at 6 p.m. [Bookworks](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **Nasario García** for a reading and signing of his new book, *Martíneztown, 1945: Tales of Life and Loss in an Albuquerque Barrio*.

November 7 at 1 p.m. [Quill & Quest Bookstore](#) (Farmington)

Join **Margaret Cheasebro** for a signing of her books, including *The Healing Tree*.

November 7 at 5 p.m. [Otero Artspace](#) (Alamogordo)

Join **Charmayne Samuelson** for a reading and signing of *Mata Ortiz: Poetry of the Clay / Poesía del Barro*, alongside Mata Ortiz master potters Héctor Gallegos and Laura Bugarini.

November 7 at 5:30 p.m. [Books on the Bosque](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **Adrien Lawyer** for a presentation of *Gender Transition for Dummies*.

November 8 at 10 a.m. [Esther Bone Memorial Library](#) (Rio Rancho)

Join authors who contributed to *Unbreaking the Circle: Stories of Service*, the South West Writers 2025 military anthology, for a reading.

November 8 at 3 p.m. [Books on the Bosque](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **Demetria Martínez**, **Sharon Niederman**, and **Sage Vogel** for a reading.

November 8 at 5:30 p.m. [Books on the Bosque](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **Marie Parks** and **Jes Honard** for the launch of their new book, *Undeniable*.

November 8 at 7 p.m. [Drunk Skull Sidewalk Cinema](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **Drunk Skull Books** at Flock of Moons Brewery for a behind-the-scenes glimpse of book and multimedia projects.

November 9 at 2 p.m. [Books on the Bosque](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **Michelle Gurule** for a presentation of *Thank You, John* in conversation with Georgiann Davis.

November 9 at 5 p.m. [SOMOS](#) (Taos)

Join **Kate Christenson** for a reading from her new novel, *The Sacred and the Divine*.

November 11 at 6 p.m. [Bookworks](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **Enrique Lamadrid** for a reading and signing of his new book, *Hearts in Motion, Hearts in Place: The Quest for Querencias on Turtle Island and Abya Yala*.

November 11 at 6 p.m. [Collected Works](#) (Santa Fe)

Join **Zeyn Joukhadar**, the Santa Fe Art Institute artist in residence, for a reading and discussion of *Both/And: Essays by Trans and Gender-Nonconforming Writers of Color*.

November 12 at 6 p.m. [Collected Works](#) (Santa Fe)

Join **Reynolds Holding** for a discussion of *Better Judgment: How Three Judges Are Bringing Justice Back to the Courts*, in conversation with Judge Martha Vázquez.

November 13 at 6 p.m. [Bookworks](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **Mark Lee Gardner** for a reading and signing of his new book, *Brothers of the Gun: Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, and a Reckoning in Tombstone*.

November 14 at 4 p.m. [Santa Fe Public Library](#) (Santa Fe)

Join **Vivian Mary Carroll** for a reading and signing of her poetry collection *Talking Leaves Scrapbook*.

November 14 at 6 p.m. [Community Arts](#) (Santa Fe)

Join **Emma Hine**, **Michelle Holland**, and **Donald Levering** for a poetry reading.

November 15 at 4 p.m. [Geronimo's Books](#) (Santa Fe)

Join **Chee Brossy** and **David Mutchlecner** for a poetry reading.

November 14 at 5:30 p.m. [SOMOS](#) (Taos)

Join **Marcelo Sosa**, **Shelly Catterson**, and **F.R. Bob Romero** for a reading.

November 16 at 4 p.m. [SOMOS](#) (Taos)

Join **Lucy Herrmann**, **Steve Fox**, **Eileen Wiard**, **Michael Burney**, and others for a tribute to **Sallie Bingham**.

November 20 at 6 p.m. [Bookworks](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **David Policansky** for a reading and signing of his latest book, *Historic Catholic Churches of Northwestern New Mexico*.

November 22 at 3 p.m. [Books on the Bosque](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **Lynn Miller** and **Lynda Miller** for an event.

November 22 at 4 p.m. [Geronimo's Books](#) (Santa Fe)

Join **Michelle Otero** and **Demetria Martínez** for a poetry reading.

November 23 at 12 p.m. [Barnes & Noble](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **Janet Roseman** for a signing of her book *The Eternal Bond: Daughters Honor Their Mothers on the Other Side*.

November 23 at 3 p.m. [Books on the Bosque](#) (Albuquerque)

Join NM Book Awards winners **Ana Romero**, **Vaunda Micheaux Nelson**, **Korie Leigh**, **Laurel Goodluck**, and **Khadijah VanBrakle**.

November 23 at 4:30 p.m. [Collected Works](#) (Santa Fe)

Join **John Macker**, **Erica Elliott**, **Tania Katan**, and **Nasario García** for an event titled Gathering Voices: Stories of Healing, Creativity, and Belonging.

November 24 at 9:30 a.m. [Doodlet](#) (Santa Fe)

Join **Haven Lindsay** for a reading from the children's book *The Blue Dog and the White Horse*, with an accompanying activity.

November 25 at 6 p.m. [Collected Works](#) (Santa Fe)

Join **Julia Cameron** for a discussion of *The Daily Artist's Way: 366 Meditations for Creative Living* in conversation with Joel Fotinos.

November 25 at 6 p.m. [Bookworks](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **Connie Willis** for a discussion, reading, and signing.

November 29 at 4 p.m. [Books on the Bosque](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **Ruby Martinez** for a presentation of her new book, *An Embroidery of Souls*.

November 30 at 3 p.m. [Books on the Bosque](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **Gency Brown** for a presentation of her new book, *Light in the Dark Forest*.

December 1 at 6 p.m. [Bookworks](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **Ann Lane Hedlund** for a reading and signing of her latest book, *Mac Schweitzer: A Southwest Maverick and Her Art*.

December 4 at 6 p.m. [Ouray Community Library](#) (Ouray, CO)

Join Bree Rosenblum to celebrate the launch of *And*.

December 6 at 10 a.m. [Bernalillo Community Museum](#) (Bernalillo)

Join authors who contributed to *Unbreaking the Circle: Stories of Service*, the SouthWest Writers 2025 military anthology, for a reading.

More Opportunities for Writers

Please note, there may be fees associated with these opportunities.



NEW MEXICO
PRESS WOMEN

INSPIRES & CELEBRATES PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATORS

2026 NMPW New Mexico Professional Communication Contest

The 2026 New Mexico Press Women Communication Contest is open for submissions of work published or broadcast in 2025 through **January 21, 2026**. The state contest is the first tier in the National Federation of Press Women's contest. Entries are submitted through the National Federation of Press Women's Communications Contest portal. Learn more [here](#).

Virtual Comics Workshop

Join the New Mexico Book Association for a Virtual Story & Art Comics Workshop ideal for beginners who want to create their own comics, held via Zoom on **November 6** at 6 p.m. Learn more [here](#).



The MSU Roadrunner Review Submissions

The Roadrunner Review, a student-curated literary journal out of the creative writing program at the Metropolitan State University of Denver, is open to submissions of fiction, flash fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, and visual art through **November 15**. Learn more [here](#).

Digging Deep: Investigative Reporting and the Guardianship Crisis

At the SouthWest Writers meeting via Zoom on **November 19** at 6:30 p.m., Phillip Marshall will offer an online presentation encouraging attendees to reflect on their own writing experiences and explore the connections between storytelling, investigative journalism, and

SOMOS Fundraiser

Hampton Sides will read selections from his work, sign books, and share his writing and research strategies at the SOMOS Fundraiser in Taos on **November 8**. Learn more [here](#).

Prompt Nights

Carrie Nassif and Christine Reed are hosting Prompt Nights every second Thursday at SOMOS Salon & Bookshop in Taos. Writers of any genre are welcome, and generative writing prompts will be provided. The next Prompt Night is **November 13**. Learn more [here](#).

The ReWriting Room: A Hybrid Monthly Writers & Wellness Circle

Join Dr. LaNysha Adams for a new monthly hybrid experience online and at the Santa Fe Community College that blends writing, reflection, and well-being. The next event is on **November 14** at 4 p.m. Learn more [here](#).

Firecracker Awards for Independently Published Literature

The Firecracker Awards, given by the Community of Literary Magazines and Presses, celebrate books and magazines in the categories of Fiction, Creative Nonfiction, Poetry, Magazines/General Excellence, and Magazines/Best Debut. Submissions can be made by the publisher, or by the author with the publisher's consent, through **November 14**. Learn more [here](#).

Four Elements of Writing a Family History

In this event, David F. Menicucci will provide insights for how to successfully research, write, publish and market a family history book, and how writers can also bring their research and writing projects to fruition. The presentation will take place at Albuquerque's Main Library (Downtown) on **November 15** at 10:30 a.m. Learn more [here](#).

Acorn Publishing Debut Author Prize

The Acorn Publishing Debut Author Prize is open to unpublished fiction and memoir writers across the U.S. who have completed manuscripts of 95,000 words or less. The winner, announced at the 2026 San Diego

advocacy. Learn more [here](#).

SOMOS Presents Craft & Critique

A series of eight monthly workshops for writers of fiction, creative nonfiction, and memoir is offered online via Zoom from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., with the next event on **November 22**. Register [here](#).

What I Want from a Writing Society

The Croak & Dagger meeting on **November 25** will feature a panel titled What I Want from a Writing Society. The meeting will also include a light supper, and Croak & Dagger officers will be installed. More details to be announced [here](#).

SOMOS Spoken Word Open Mic

Carrie Nassif is hosting an open mic every third Thursday at SOMOS Salon & Bookshop. The next open mic is **November 30** at 6:30 p.m., and interested writers can contact Carrie Nassif [here](#).

The 2026 Zia Book Award

The 2026 Zia Book Award will honor women authors of children's books who have significant ties to New Mexico. Submissions can be made by the author, publisher, or someone else on the author's behalf through **January 29, 2026**. Learn more [here](#).

Story Unlikely Short Story Contest

Story Unlikely is accepting submissions to its annual short story contest through **January 31**. Learn more and submit [here](#).

The WILLA Literary Award

The WILLA Literary Award, named in honor of Willa Cather, recognizes women's and girls' stories set in the North American West. Submissions to this award, for books published in 2025, are open through **February 1, 2026**. Learn more [here](#).

Green Fire Times Submissions

Green Fire Times, a platform for regional, community-based voices, invites submissions of articles about New Mexico and the Southwest. Learn more and submit articles [here](#).

Grey Zones Submissions

Grey Zones accepts submissions on a rolling basis related to the guiding

Writers Festival, will receive a full-service professional publishing and national launch package valued at over \$11,000. Submissions must be received by **November 15**. Learn more [here](#).

principles of Unlearning, Vigilant Engagement, and X-ing Boundaries. Learn more [here](#).



The third annual **Sandia Starforgers Writers Retreat and Workshop** for science-fiction, fantasy, and horror writers is taking place **April 24 to 27, 2026**, in Albuquerque. There is a scholarship available for one writer with financial need (applications for the scholarship are due **November 30**). Instructors at this event include:

- Charlie Jane Anders: Hugo, Nebula, and Locus Award-winning author
- Mary Robinette Kowal: Hugo, Nebula, and Locus Award-winning author and audiobook narrator
- dave ring: Ignite and World Fantasy Award-nominated publisher of Neon Hemlock Press (joining virtually)
- Alexandria Valentine: Editor-in-Chief of *Harriet's House* (joining virtually)
- Darling Heart: writer, editor, creative, and communications professional (joining virtually)
- Geoff Habiger: founder of Artemesia Publishing and NM-AZ Award-winning author
- Marie Parks: NM-AZ Award-winning author and Futurescapes Most Promising New Author nominee

For more information and to register, click [here](#).

In Others' Words

“Two helpful words to keep in mind at the beginning of any writing adventure are pleasure and spaciousness. If we connect a sense of joy with our writing, we may be inclined to explore further.”

—Naomi Shihab Nye

Have a favorite quote about writing you'd like to share? [Send it to us!](#)



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