

The New Mexico Writer

JANUARY 2026

Supporting and connecting the literary community in New Mexico.

A publication of **NMwriters**
SUPPORTING and CONNECTING THE LITERARY COMMUNITY

Ticketing Opens for 2026 New Mexico Writers Annual Dinner

The eighth New Mexico Writers (NMW) Annual Dinner will feature Mexican American and Indigenous poet and novelist Jennifer Givhan in conversation with Diné fiction writer and poet Cynthia J. Sylvester.

Givhan's latest novel, *Salt Bones* (Mulholland/Little, Brown, 2025), appeared on *Publishers Weekly's* Best Books of 2025 list in the Mystery/Thriller category. 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. Givhan was the 2024 Visiting Professor of Creative Writing at the University of New Mexico.

The dinner keynote will again be styled as an interview. Givhan will be in conversation with NMW Board Member Cynthia J. Sylvester. Sylvester's work has appeared in *ABQ in Print*, *Leon Literary Review*, *Lunch Ticket*, *As Us Journal*, and *Bosque (The Magazine)*, among other publications. Her first novel *The Half White Album* was published by the University of New Mexico Press in 2023 and received the New Mexico-Arizona Book Award for best LGBTQ+ book.

The 2026 NMW Annual Dinner will be held on Thursday, April 30, at the historic La Fonda on the Plaza in Santa Fe. The dinner brings established and aspiring writers together to celebrate and inspire each other and serves to recognize each year's NMW grant recipients.



Tickets and Sustaining Member Discount

Tickets for the 2026 dinner are \$125. The dinner remains solely a networking event and a celebration of the literary arts in New Mexico. The price of the dinner ticket represents the total cost of NMW putting on this event.

If you are an active Sustaining Member of NMW, you'll receive a discount code via email to reduce the ticket price by 10%, through March 31. You can become a new Sustaining Member or renew your Sustaining Membership [here](#). Please contact NMW via [email](#) if you have any questions about your membership status or the discount code.

Genre Tables

When buying your ticket, you can also reserve a seat at a genre table for \$10, which allows you to sit with other writers working in your genre or in a genre that simply interests you. Seating at a genre table is limited. Genre tables for the 2026 dinner are fiction, nonfiction, memoir, poetry, young adult and children's books, and screenwriting/playwriting. New for 2026, a table is designated for those in the publishing industry, including editors, agents, publicists, book designers, and publishers.

Reduced-Price Tickets

NMW continues to operate a program that provides reduced-price admission to writers who may need financial support to attend. You may add a donation "So Others May Attend" when you purchase your dinner tickets. Please [email](#) NMW if you would like to be considered for reduced-price tickets to the 2026 dinner.

Attendance will be capped at 200 again, so organizers urge you to [buy your dinner tickets soon!](#)

Are you enjoying this issue of *The New Mexico Writer*?

You can fund this publication
by becoming a Sustaining Member!

JOIN NOW

New Mexico Writers 2026 Grant Program Open for Applications



New Mexico and Diné writers may now apply for the annual writing grants offered by New Mexico Writers (NMW). The program provides financial support for both new projects and works already in progress.

Grants are available across the following genres: fiction, nonfiction, poetry, journalism, playwriting, and screenwriting, with awards typically ranging from \$500

to \$2,000. Since launching the program in 2019, NMW has awarded more than \$70,000 to 63 writers from communities throughout New Mexico and the greater Navajo Nation. Applications must be submitted no later than Friday, March 6, 2026.

NMW grants have helped grantees reach major professional milestones across genres. Anna Sochocky, a 2024 grantee, used the funding to attend the Horses and Humans Research Foundation's annual conference, which was vital to the completion of her memoir *Unbroken Heart: A Memoir of Horses, Health, and Healing*. Her book is scheduled for publication by Trafalgar Square Books in 2026. Fellow 2024 grantee Damien Flores used NMW support to participate at the nationally renowned Mercury & Nuba Poetry Slams and writing workshops, experiences that directly contributed to his selection as Poet Laureate of the City of Albuquerque.

Writers selected for 2026 grants will be recognized at the NMW annual dinner on April 30, held at La Fonda on the Plaza in Santa Fe. Those interested in applying or learning more about the program can visit the NMW website [here](#).

Damien Augustine Wins Grand Prize in *Pasatiempo* Writing Contest Winners

Diné writer Damien Augustine is the Grand Prize winner of the 2025 *Pasatiempo* Writing Contest for his entry *Without Windows*.

“This narrative grabbed me from the start with its originality, beautiful use of language, and emotional punch,” Anne Hillerman, who served as the contest’s grand prize judge, said.

Century Bank was this year’s Literary Legend *Pasatiempo* Writing Contest sponsor. The competition aims to recognize literary talent across New Mexico. Winners received cash prizes along with the usual goodies and gift cards provided by the generous supporters. Winning entries were published in *Pasatiempo* on December 19, 2025, including a brief bio and a photo of the winning entrants.



In addition to the grand prize, winners were selected by judges Deborah Jackson Taffa, Caroline Fraser, and Lauren Camp in the following categories:

- **Adult Fiction Winners:** Kelly Dolejsi, Jennifer Edelson, Rochelle Williams, and Kim Fowler.
- **Youth Fiction Prize Winners:** Van Muir Smith, Suzanne Paris, Seth Abes, and Peter Brennan.
- **Adult Nonfiction Winners:** Vicki Holmsten, Eleanor Channell, and Michael Andryc.
- **Youth Nonfiction Prize Winners:** Khen Julia and Kieran MacCarthy-Jacobs.
- **Adult Poetry Winners:** Marsie Silvestro, Eve West Bessier, and Marie Blessing.
- **Youth Poetry Prize Winners:** Sasha Smucker, Avalon Dzurec, Maida Ryan, and Amaya Ortiz.

Contest winners will share their work at a public reading on January 25 at La Fonda on the Plaza in Santa Fe.

Santa Fe International Literary Festival Again Attracts Top-Flight Writers



Star-studded authors are descending on Santa Fe's Community Convention Center for the 2026 Santa Fe International Literary Festival (SFILF) to be held May 15-17, 2026 at the Santa Fe Community Convention Center.

Among those joining the lineup are Ada Limón, the first Latina U.S. Poet Laureate; Navajo Nation Poet Laureate Jake Skeets; Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer Caroline Fraser; *New York Times* bestselling author Craig Johnson; actor and filmmaker DezBaa'; New Mexico Writers (NMW) Board Member Priyanka Kumar; and NMW Board Chair JJ Amaworo Wilson.

"The wide range of voices that converge here are what makes this event truly meaningful, and Santa Fe is an ideal setting in which to foster connection among book lovers of all backgrounds," Carmella Padilla, NMW grants committee chair and co-founder of SFILF, said.

Early bird tickets go on sale Tuesday, January 20, at 7 a.m. The full author lineup and details about the festival are on the SFILF website [here](#).

Active Sustaining Members of NMW should stay tuned for a Perk Alert about a members-only event to occur during the 2026 SFILF.

NM Writers Continues to Celebrate 2025 NM Book Awards Winners & Finalists in 2026

Two New Mexico Book Awards publicity events are in the planning stages for 2025 winners and finalists who live near Abiquiú and Taos. These events will take place in February 2026 at Abiquiú Inn and SOMOS.

Lisa McCoy, director of the NM Book Awards, had the pleasure of meeting the good folks at Abiquiú Inn in December. Janet Tuten, general manager, and Dawn Quintanilla, sales manager, are looking forward to hosting the NM Book Awards event in the Inn's art gallery room. Refreshments will be served, compliments of Abiquiú Inn.



In addition to events coordinated by New Mexico Writers, 2025 honorees are celebrating at their own events. Lif Strand, a finalist in the Cover Design category for her book, *Stolen Sisters*, attended a local author event in Pie Town that featured writers from Catron County and beyond. Jeffrey M. Hills, a

first-time author and finalist for his memoir *My Brooklyn Bridge*, will be at SOMOS in Taos on January 16.

McCoy continues to chat with New Mexico bookstores about displaying winning and finalist books and hosting author events. At recent visits to Organic Books and Bookworks, McCoy spotted winner and finalist books on the shelves. Look for NM Book Awards publicity event details in future issues of *The New Mexico Writer*.

New Mexico Writers Featured in the *Albuquerque Journal*



The *Albuquerque Journal* recently featured New Mexico Writers (NMW) in an article highlighting the organization's sponsorship of the New Mexico Book Awards. Last year marked the first year NMW managed the awards, which were founded in 2007 by Paul Rhetts and his late wife, Barb Awalt. Rhetts retired from the program in 2024.

Both Rhetts and Lisa McCoy, current director of the NM Book Awards, were interviewed for the piece. To honor Rhetts' longtime stewardship, NMW created the Paul Rhetts Award for the highest rated book. The inaugural winner, in 2025, was *Radiant* by Vaunda Micheaux Nelson.

“They’re a terrific group to pass the baton to,” Rhetts said of NMW. “I know that they are an organization that will give it the loving care that I hope I gave. They do love New Mexico books as much as I do.”

Read the entire article [here](#).

New Mexico Writers Grantee News



2020 NMW Grantee **Khadijah VanBrakle**'s sophomore novel, *My Perfect Family*, was included in the Kirkus book list of the Best Teen & YA Books of 2025 About Family. See the list [here](#).

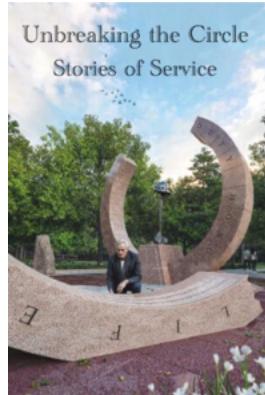


2022 NMW Grantee and current Board Member **Zahra Marwan** was featured in *Southwest Contemporary* for her upcoming 2026 exhibition, *Paper House*, at Hecho a Mano in Santa Fe. Read more [here](#).



2019 NMW Grantee **Laurel Goodluck** has a new picture book, *Stories Are the Heart of the World*, scheduled for release on May 5, 2026 by Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. Learn more [here](#).

Briefly Noted



SouthWest Writers received a FY26 Arts & The Military Mini Grant from New Mexico Arts to fund a statewide outreach project led by **Jim Tritten**. This program will bring veteran and military-family authors to communities across New Mexico for in-person readings and discussions about how writing contributed to their healing.

Charmayne Samuelson learned that her book, *Mata Ortiz Poetry of the Clay: Pottery. Poems. Artists.*, was presented to Alberto Barranco Chavarria, Mexico's Ambassador to the Holy See, in Vatican City (Rome, Italy).

Ella Schaefer and **Rena Sapon-White** released the self-recorded and self-



Albuquerque author and 2026 NMW annual dinner keynote speaker **Jennifer Givhan** revealed the cover of her forthcoming novel, *The Sleeping Sisters*, slated for release by Mulholland Books on August 18, 2026.

The **Pie Town Pie Company** in Pie Town, NM hosted an author event featuring writers from Catron County and beyond for book signings and conversation to spotlight the growing literary community in rural New Mexico.

Nina Amir announced the January 6, 2026 release of her book, *Change the World One Book At a Time: Make a Positive and Meaningful Difference with Your Words*.

produced audiobook edition of their award-winning novel, *The Christmas Pic.*

Horacio Chávez announced the release of his novel, *That Which Dwells—Nihíni’á: Awakening.*

Ruth E Thaler-Carter recently published an updated edition of her booklet, *Get Paid to Write! Getting Started as a Freelance Writer*; was named chair of the Communications Committee of the La Luz community in recognition of her contributions to date in writing for and editing the *La Luz Voice* magazine; and is the new coordinator of the New Mexico chapter of the Editorial Freelancers Association.

Dita Dow won the Rocky Mountain Mystery Writers of America Six-Word Mystery Contest in the Thriller category. See all finalist and winning entries [here](#).

Books on the Bosque hosted **Tom Andes** for a book signing and reading of his novel, *Wait There Till You Hear from Me.*

Ty Bannerman announced the forthcoming February 3, 2026 release of *Nuclear Family: A Memoir of the Atomic West*, to be published by UNM Press.

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

January 6 at 5:30 p.m. [Books on the Bosque](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **Dina Gilio-Whitaker** (Colville Confederated Tribes) for a book reading and signing of her latest release, *Who Gets to Be Indian? Ethnic Fraud and Other Difficult Conversations About Native American Identity.*

January 9 at 6 p.m. [Collected Works](#) (Santa Fe)

Join **Julian Brave NoiseCat** in conversation with NMW Board Member **Deborah Jackson Taffa** on *We Survived the Night*. This event is co-presented by the Santa Fe International Literary Festival, and Zoom attendance is available.

January 10 at 1 p.m. [Santa Fe Public Library](#) (Santa Fe)

Join **Janet Lynn Roseman, PhD** for a signing and reading of *The Eternal Bond: Daughters Honor Their Mothers on the Other Side.*

January 10 at 3 p.m. [Books on the Bosque](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **Chris Allen** and **Paul J. Knight** for a shared reading, discussion, and signing of *The Music of Creation.*

January 10 at 3:30 p.m. [Jean Cocteau Theater](#) (Santa Fe)

Join **Kirk Ellis** for a pre-publication event to celebrate the upcoming launch of *They Kill People: Bonnie and Clyde, a Hollywood Revolution, and America's Obsession*

with *Guns and Outlaws* accompanied by a screening of *Bonnie and Clyde*. Ellis will give the introduction to the film and sign books.

January 10 at 4 p.m. [Geronimo's Books](#) (Santa Fe)

Join author **Nancy Perez Fugere** and illustrator **Issa Nyaphaga** for a signing and reading of *Mi Tia Cajeta*.

January 11 at 3 p.m. [Books on the Bosque](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **Adrienne M. Enghouse** for a book reading and signing of *The Pearl of Great Price: A Journey Within*.

January 11 at 2 p.m. [FUSION | 708](#) (Albuquerque)

Join contributors **Laura Paskus, Myrriah Gómez, Rica Maestas**, and NMW 2023 Grantee **Santana Shorty** for a reading panel and conversation to celebrate the winter issue of *El Palacio* magazine. Following the readings, NMW 2020 Grantee and the Editor of *El Palacio*, **Emily Withnall**, will facilitate a Q&A.

January 13 at 6 p.m. [Santa Fe Public Library](#) (Santa Fe)

Join **David Abbey**, former head of the New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, for an author talk around his book *Forty Years in the New Mexico Roundhouse*.

January 15 at 6 p.m. [Collected Works](#) (Santa Fe)

Join **Wesley Granberg-Michaelson**, author of *The Soulwork of Justice: Four Movements for Contemplative Action*, in conversation with lawyer Ester Jamison. Zoom attendance is available.

January 16 at 5:30 p.m. [SOMOS](#) (Taos)

Join **Jeffrey M. Hills** for an event to celebrate his memoir, *My Brooklyn Bridge: Take a Journey with Me as I Build a Career in Dentistry, Inventing, and Furniture*.

January 17 at 3 p.m. [Books on the Bosque](#) (Albuquerque)

Join author and historian **Keith Warren Lloyd** for a reading and discussion around *The War Correspondents: The Incredible Stories of the Brave Men and Women Who Covered the Fight Against Hitler's Germany*.

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

Join **Jake Fournier** for a reading and signing of his latest poetry collection, *Punishment Bag*.

January 24 at 1 p.m. [OpCit Books](#) (Santa Fe)

Join **Nina Amir** for a launch event celebrating the release of her latest book, *Change the World One Book At a Time: Make a Positive and Meaningful Difference with Your Words*.

January 24 at 2 p.m. [Placitas Community Library](#) (Placitas)

Join **Dr. Wendy Johnson** for a discussion and reading from *Kinship Medicine; Cultivating Interdependence to Heal the Earth and Ourselves*.

January 25 at 3 p.m. [La Fonda on the Plaza](#) (Santa Fe)

Join the 2025 winners of the *Pasatiempo* Writing Contest for a public reading of their award-winning works.

January 29 at 6 p.m. [Bookworks](#) (Albuquerque)

Join **Bjorn Fredrickson**, New Mexico Wild's Conservation Director, for a book signing to celebrate the release of *Wild Waters: Passport to New Mexico's Rivers*.

January 31 at 1 p.m. Books on the Bosque (Albuquerque)

Join **Nina Amir** for a live reading, discussion, and Q&A from her latest release, *Change the World One Book At a Time: Make a Positive and Meaningful Difference with Your Words*.

February 3 at 6 p.m. Collected Works (Santa Fe)

Join **Kirk Ellis** for the launch of *They Kill People: Bonnie and Clyde, a Hollywood Revolution, and America's Obsession with Guns and Outlaws* with a discussion and book signing.

More Opportunities for Writers

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



**NEW MEXICO
PRESS WOMEN**

NMPW New Mexico Professional Communication Contest

The 2026 New Mexico Press Women Communication Contest is open for submissions through **February 18, 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](#).

Prompt Nights at SOMOS

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 **January 8, 2026**. Learn more [here](#).

We All Have a Story: Memoir Musings and Mistakes

At the SouthWest Writers meeting in person and via Zoom on **January 10, 2026**, Kathleen A. Hessler will offer a presentation on memoir musings and mistakes. Learn more [here](#).

Open Mic at SOMOS

Carrie Nassif is hosting Spoken Word Open Mic every third Thursday at SOMOS Salon & Bookshop in Taos.



**MARTHA'S
Institute of Creative Writing
VINEYARD**

Martha's Vineyard Institute of Creative Writing Fellowships

The Martha's Vineyard Institute of Creative Writing is accepting submissions for their Summer Writers' Conference Fellowship through **January 19, 2026**. Their Writer of Color Fellowships are open to all BIPOC writers ages 18+, as well as full fellowships for parent-writers, queer writers, teachers & educators, full-time caregivers, and emerging writers. Learn more [here](#).

NMBA Winter Fiesta

The 2026 Winter Fiesta hosted by the New Mexico Book Association on **February 12, 2026** will feature Anne Hillerman as speaker and a presentation of the Harris Book Awards. Register [here](#).

Inside a Writing Contest

At the Croak & Dagger meeting on **February 24, 2026**, Lisa McCoy will share about the New Mexico Book Awards, giving authors an inside peek into a writing contest. Learn more [here](#).

P.S. Literary Agency Scholarship

P.S. Literary Agency will begin accepting submissions for its Emerging Writers Scholarship on January 5, 2026 through **February 27, 2026** (or until 125

Writers of any genre are welcome to share poetry, prose, storytelling, a capella. The next Open Mic is **January 15, 2026**. Learn more [here](#).

Creating and Using Outlines in Fiction
A workshop hosted by SouthWest Writers will take place in person and via Zoom on **January 17, 2026**. Holly Day will guide writers through creating an outline and offer in-class writing exercises. Register [here](#).

Think Young: Using #Instagram to Publicize Your Books

At the Croak & Dagger meeting on **January 27, 2026**, Saleema Ishq will share book marketing strategies for authors using Instagram. Learn more [here](#).

How to Monetize Your Book and Make Your Words Work for You

At the SouthWest Writers meeting via Zoom on **January 28, 2026**, Glory St. Germain will offer a presentation on building a successful business from writing. Learn more [here](#).

Zia Book Award

The 2026 Zia Book Award will honor women authors of children's books who have significant ties to New Mexico. Submissions to New Mexico Press Women can be made through **January 29, 2026**. Learn more [here](#).

WOW! Creative Nonfiction Essay Contest

Women On Writing is accepting submissions for its quarterly creative nonfiction essay contest through **January 31, 2026**. Learn more [here](#).

Story Unlikely Short Story Contest
Story Unlikely is accepting submissions to its annual short story contest through **January 31, 2026**. Learn more and submit [here](#).

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

applications are received). Learn more [here](#).

The Introverts Guide to Publishing & Publicity

An online workshop hosted by New Mexico Book Association will take place on **March 12, 2026**. Join author Haven Lindsay for a workshop on navigating author life as an introvert. Register [here](#).

Trickster Literary Journal Submissions

Trickster, a publication by Northern New Mexico College, is accepting submissions through **March 27, 2026**. Submitted poems, prose, and pieces of artwork should align with this year's theme: metamorphosis. Learn more [here](#).

Tadpole Press Writing Contest

Tadpole Press welcomes submissions for their 100-Word Writing Contest through **April 30, 2026**. Learn more [here](#).

NMPW Annual Conference

The annual New Mexico Press Women's conference will be held Friday and Saturday, **May 1–2, 2026**, at Isleta Resort. The conference will include workshops and winner announcements of the Zia Book Award, Communications Contest, Communicator of Achievement, and scholarships. The conference theme is "Resilient Communicators – Thriving in Challenging Times." Learn more [here](#).

Romance Writers of America

The Romance Writers of America is open for workshop proposals for their 2026 conference, which will be held in Albuquerque **July 15–18, 2026**. Learn more [here](#).

Writing Excuses at Sea

Sail with the hosts of the Hugo Award-winning Writing Excuses podcast from Seattle, WA to Alaska **September 3–11, 2026**. During this event, you'll hone your craft, connect with fellow writers, and make progress on your latest projects. This is the final annual cruise (for now). Learn more [here](#).

Green Fire Times Submissions

Women Writing the West are open through **February 1, 2026**. Learn more [here](#).

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](#).



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. 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 Book Awards-winning author
- Marie Parks: NM-AZ Book Awards-winning author and Futurescapes Most Promising New Author nominee

For more information and to register, click [here](#). Only a few tickets remain.

In Others' Words

“You can’t use up creativity. The more you use, the more you have.”

—Maya Angelou

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



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New Mexico Writers | 1066 Governor Dempsey Drive | Santa Fe, NM 87501 US

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