



NMwriters

SUPPORTING *and* CONNECTING THE LITERARY COMMUNITY

8th ANNUAL DINNER

APRIL 30, 2026 | SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

MAY 15-17, 2026 • SFINTERNATIONALLITFEST.ORG



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Stories unite us.

Photo © Jack Parsons

We look forward to welcoming you to an unforgettable long weekend dedicated to the power of story. Join us at the Santa Fe Community Convention Center for more than thirty events with literary legends, book signings, and more.

Authors include:

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*Cover: Clouds over
the Bosque del Apache.
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8th ANNUAL DINNER

APRIL 30, 2026 | SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

LUMPKINS BALLROOM | LA FONDA ON THE PLAZA



Pulitzer Prize-winning World War II correspondent Ernie Pyle works in his Albuquerque home in 1943. Beloved for portraying everyday GIs on the front lines, he was killed by Japanese machine-gun fire on the island of Ie Shima on April 18, 1945. Photo by John Candelario, 1943. Courtesy of the Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (NMHM/DCA), negative number 165756.

About New Mexico Writers

New Mexico Writers is a not-for-profit organization founded in 2016 to support and connect New Mexico's literary community. Our mission is to provide grants, networking, and career development opportunities to aspiring and established writers from communities throughout New Mexico and the greater Navajo Nation. We believe that by addressing cultural, financial, and professional barriers facing writers, we will build a more vibrant and diverse literary community. Our annual dinner brings together writers and others to celebrate and inspire each other as well as to honor our annual grant recipients. In addition to our grantmaking program, our literary outreach programs include Rising Writers, the New Mexico Book Awards, and our award-winning monthly publication, *The New Mexico Writer*. To learn more, or become a member, visit NMwriters.org.



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New Mexico Writers

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LUMPKINS BALLROOM | LA FONDA ON THE PLAZA

5:30 P.M. RECEPTION

Cash bar, time to mingle, browse book displays, and enter the raffle

- Winning and Finalist books from the 2025 New Mexico Book Awards
- Books by NM Writers grantees
- Books by New Mexico Book Association members
- Raffle (proceeds support NM Writers grantmaking program)

6:30 P.M. DINNER AND WELCOME

JJ Amaworo Wilson, *Chair, NM Writers Board*

6:50 P.M. PROGRAM

- James McGrath Morris: Introduction of NM Writers Executive Director Lisa McCoy
- Lisa McCoy: New Mexico Book Awards presentation
- Carmella Padilla: Award for outstanding service to the writing community
- Raffle drawings
- NM Writers 2026 Grantee Awards
- Video of 2025 NM Writers grantees

KEYNOTE SPEAKER JENNIFER GIVHAN

in conversation with Cynthia J. Sylvester

8:45 P.M. CLOSING REMARKS

9 P.M. SPEAKER BOOK SIGNING



KEYNOTE SPEAKER 2026

Jennifer Givhan

JENNIFER GIVHAN is a Mexican American and Indigenous poet and novelist who lives and writes in Albuquerque. Her family comes from the Indigenous peoples of New Mexico, Texas, and Mexico, including Ysleta del Sur, the Tigua Indian peoples of the Ysleta region of El Paso, and the Huichol of Nayarit.

Givhan's novel, *Salt Bones* (Mulholland/Little, Brown, 2025), appeared on *Publishers Weekly's* Best Books of 2025 list in the Mystery/Thriller category. Two of her 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 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.

Givhan's new novel, *The Sleeping Sisters*, will be released in August.



CONVERSATION STARTER

Cynthia J. Sylvester



CYNTHIA J. SYLVESTER (Diné) is born into the Kiyaa'áanii Clan for the Bilagáana Clan and is a native of Albuquerque. A graduate of the University of New Mexico, she received her MFA in creative writing from Warren Wilson College. She is a member of the NM Writers board of directors and serves on the Rising Writers committee.

Sylvester's debut book, *The Half-White Album*, published in 2023 by University of New Mexico Press, won best LGBTQ+ book in the New Mexico-Arizona Book Awards. Her stories and poems have appeared in *Poetry Magazine*, *Leon Literary Review*, *Lunch Ticket*, *ABQ in Print*, *AsUs*, and *bosque (the magazine)*, among others. She is a recipient of the Taos Writers Conference Native Writer Award, and

her flash fiction and non-fiction were nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

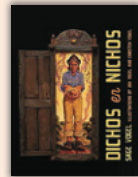
Sylvester is on the creative writing faculty of the Emergine Diné Writers Institute at Navajo Technical University. She also hosts the monthly ABQ DimeStories, an open mic event featuring three-minute stories written and read by an author.

Currently, Sylvester is working on a novel set in Albuquerque that follows the lives of four women who met when they played basketball in high school. The novel picks up their lives when the women are 49 years old, examining how what happened in high school continues to impact their lives. This time of year, Sylvester can also be found pulling weeds in her backyard.

2026 New Mexico Book Awards Now Open For Entries

Anyone producing a book with a creative connection to New Mexico may now submit entries to the 2026 New Mexico Book Awards, a program of NM Writers.

The deadline for entering is May 8. Results will be announced in early October on the NM Writers website and in *The New Mexico Writer*.



The book awards program enters its second year under NM Writers management, with Lisa McCoy serving as director. In 2025, the competition received 212 entries and recognized 48 winners and more than 150 finalists across multiple categories.

In addition to category awards, the Paul Rhetts Award will again be presented to the highest-rated book

in the 2026 competition. The award honors the legacy of Rhetts, who founded the New Mexico-Arizona Book Awards in 2007. He managed the program for nearly two decades before transitioning leadership to NM Writers in early 2025.

Vaunda Micheaux Nelson, the 2025 Paul Rhetts Award winner for her novel, *Radiant*, will receive her award at tonight's NM Writers Annual Dinner.

See nmwriters.org/nm-book-awards for entry eligibility, submission fee and instructions, judging, and category information.

Above: Several books by NM Writers grantees took top honors at the 2025 New Mexico Book Awards. At far left is Radiant, by Vaunda Micheaux Nelson, which won the 2025 Paul Rhetts Award, honoring the highest-rated book in the competition.

2026 NM W

MEET OUR ELEVEN OUTSTANDING GRANTEES



NICHOLAS BALDWIN is based in Albuquerque, where he is a Ph.D. student in the University of New Mexico's English Department. His work focuses on twentieth-century poetics, letters as artistic practice, and pedagogy. He has presented at the American Literature Association, the International Conference on Eugene O'Neill, and the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association. A certified yoga teacher and apprenticed papermaker and typesetter, he has held residencies throughout Europe and performed in productions of "The Cherry Orchard," "The Philadelphia," and Susan Glaspell's "Wings." His writing appears in *Berkeley Poetry Review*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, and *World Literature Today*. Grant support from NM Writers will fund a month of focused work on a landscape-based poetry project rooted in New Mexico.



ALLEN BLACK is a Navajo from Monument Valley, Arizona. He was born in Utah. His first clan is Red Running Water into Water. He currently lives in Rio Rancho, and for the last thirty years, has been working as a welder. He will use his NM Writers grant to take time off from work to illustrate his picture book about Navajo culture. He intends to use the book in a tutoring program he runs with his wife. The program uses horses to help Navajo students improve their reading and math skills.

Writers Grantees



JENNIFER BLACK identifies as Korean, White, and Mexican. She was born in Colorado Springs and currently lives in Rio Rancho. In addition to directing a nonprofit that teaches filmmaking to Navajo students through outdoor education, she works intermittently as a videographer and massage therapist. She also works part-time at an unrelated nonprofit. She runs a tutoring program with her husband that helps Navajo students improve their math and reading skills by using horses. She plans to use her grant to take time off from work to finish her novel-in-progress about a wildfire.



VICTORIANO CÁRDENAS is a poet and writer from northern New Mexico. He holds an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of New Mexico, and his debut book of poetry, *Portraits as Animal*, was published in 2023 by Bloomsday Literary Press. The project was also supported by a 2023 grant from NM Writers. Recently, his novella, *Casa de Sueños*, was selected as the winner of the inaugural Stephen Graham Jones Horror Novella Competition, and is forthcoming from Subito Press. Cárdenas will put his NM Writers grant toward attending a 2026 session of the Ragdale Residency in Lake Forest, Illinois.

2026 NM WRITERS GRANTEES



BRYCE EMLEY is the author of four chapbooks, including *Future Elegies* (winner of the 2025 Orison Chapbook Prize), *Terminating Physics [a reference guide]* (Alternating Current Press), and *A Brief Family History of Drowning* (winner of the 2019 Sonder Press Chapbook Prize). A former Narrative 30 Below 30 poet and a recipient of awards and residencies from Aspen Autumn Words, the Edward F. Albee Foundation, the Glen Workshop, the Wesleyan Summer Writers Conference, Sixfold, and the Pablo Neruda Prize, Emley works as a marketing manager in Albuquerque. He will use the NM Writers grant to attend a writing conference to support publication of his forthcoming chapbook.



SARAH HELMS (she/hers) is a writer and artist living on unceded Tewa land in Albuquerque. She works in conversation with grief, love, and memory, the trifecta. Her work, traditionally unpublished, has appeared in loving friends, various writing and event projects, and being in community. Her NM Writers grant provides support so that she can complete her first chapbook, *hymn condition*, and coordinate a 5-to-10-person manuscript workshop during summer 2026. She holds an MFA in poetry and nonfiction from University of California, Riverside.



KIM HENDERSON is the author of *The Kind of Girl*, which won the Seventh Annual Rose Metal Press Short Short Chapbook Contest. Her stories have appeared in *The Kenyon Review*, *The Missouri Review*, *Tin House Online*, *Story*, *Catapult*, *The Texas Observer*, *Four Corners Voices*, and elsewhere. A graduate of the University of Montana MFA program, Kim spent fifteen years chairing the Creative Writing Department at Idyllwild Arts Academy, an arts boarding high school in Southern California, before returning home to New Mexico. She teaches writing at San Juan College and resides in Aztec. The NM Writers grant will help her complete the first draft of her novel.



JAMIE L. NATONABAH is Diné from Fort Defiance, Arizona. She is currently working toward graduating in May from the Institute of American Indian Arts with dual degrees in poetry and creative nonfiction. She lives with her family and works in Santa Fe. With the NM Writers grant, Natonabah plans to continue her work writing a memoir that delves into trauma as an Indigenous woman and the subsequent journey of healing.

2026 NM WRITERS GRANTEES



MIGUEL SANTISTEVAN of Taos was the 4th Taos Poet Laureate in 2024-2025. He has a bachelor's degree in biology and a master's degree in agriculture ecology with certifications in permaculture and ZERI design. He has written many publications and done many presentations on his research into acequias, maize, and resilient food systems. He also was a radio producer, math/science teacher, and founder of "Escuela Sol Feliz" and "Sol Feliz Farm" (EscuelaSolFeliz.com). Santistevan has been farming with acequias as a parciante for almost three decades and has served as past mayordomo and president of the Acequia Madre del Sur del Río de Don Fernando de Taos. He will use his NM Writers grant to support publication of an Acequia Users' Manual.



ASHLEY SERRAO is a writer from Santa Fe. She holds a B.A. in Screenwriting from Loyola Marymount University and has written, produced, and acted in her short films and projects. In addition to her work as a storyteller, she coaches writers in the art and discipline of writing. Serrao is working on a memoir, *Let Her Sleep*, a series of essays exploring the loss of her mother, father, and brother in an accidental house fire at age 21 while away at college. Her sister survived at age 10. She will use NM Writers grant funds for childcare while she completes one essay for her memoir-in-progress.



FATIMA VAN HATTUM has a Ph.D. in educational thought and sociocultural studies and works as Senior Director of Research and Strategy at New Mexico's statewide women's foundation. Her poetry has been published in *CALYX Journal*, *Chapter House Journal*, *Portland Review*, and anthologies from Red Hen Press and Torrey House Press. Her academic scholarship focuses on Muslim cultural studies. Van Hattum will use her Douglas Preston Travel Grant to conduct research in Egypt for *Muslims on the Mesa: The History of Abiquiu's Dar al Islam Community*, her book documenting the remarkable story of an intentional Muslim community founded in Abiquiu. She lives in Santa Fe.

NM Writers Grant Program Awards More Than \$80,000 Since 2019

Every year, NM Writers grants support writers in a variety of literary endeavors in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, journalism, playwrighting, and screenwriting. The competition highlights new works or works in progress by writers from all populations and geographic areas of New Mexico and the greater Navajo Nation. Grants are awarded at our annual dinner, where current grantees are honored as special guests.

Since the program's inception in 2019, NM Writers has awarded more than \$80,000 in grants supporting a variety of writers' needs—including attendance at a writing-related workshop, conference, or mentorship program; research-related travel costs; time away from employment to work on a project; and more.

Major support for our grant-making program is provided by bestselling author and Santa Fe resident Douglas Preston and his wife, Christine, and the Captain Bob Morris Fund. Thank you, Doug, Christine, and Captain Bob for your many gifts to New Mexico's writing community.

Two Seasons of Rising Writers in 2025

In 2025, Rising Writers, a program of NM Writers, again provided opportunities for aspiring writers statewide to spend time in conversation with an established writer or other literary professional.

Many thanks to the 2025 literary mentors who traveled near and far to generously give their time and wisdom, and to the coffee shops, bookstores, libraries, and nonprofit conference rooms that hosted their sessions.

Special thanks to Ed and Maria Gale and the Gale Family Foundation for funding Rising Writers from 2025 through 2028.

Spring 2025 Rising Writers sessions were hosted by:

- **John Fayhee** - Creative Non-fiction and Outdoor Nature Writing - Silver City
- **Justin Golding** - Writing Visually for the Screen: Show it, don't say it, and if you have to say it, don't show it! - Albuquerque
- **Sue Boggio and Mare Pearl** - Working Together: Strategies for Fiction and Non-fiction Projects - Albuquerque
- **Zahra Marwan** - Writing and Illustrating Children's Books - Gallup
- **Rus Bradburd** - Writing a Novel and Using Satire - Las Cruces
- **Byron Aspaas** (Diné) - Poetry and Creative Non-fiction - Farmington

Fall 2025 Rising Writers sessions were hosted by:

- **Geoff Habiger** - Traditional Publishing with an Indie Publisher - Albuquerque
- **Dr. Manny Loley** - Saad Bee Hiiná: Writing as Movement and Energy - Gallup (via Zoom)
- **Pam Lewis** - Creative Nonfiction: Start With Real Life - Santa Fe
- **Zahra Marwan** - Art, Writing, and Traditional Publishing for Unconventional Thinkers - Farmington
- **JJ Amaworo Wilson** - Getting Your Book Published - Silver City
- **D.J. Green** - From Writer to Author—Getting Your First Novel Published - Albuquerque

For information on the Fall 2026 Rising Writers season, see NMwriters.org/rising-writers.



Top: NM Writers board member Zahra Marwan, an award-winning children's book author and illustrator, led an inspiring session on the subject in Gallup.

Middle: Diné poet Byron Aspaas provided insights on poetry and creative nonfiction in Farmington.

Right: In Albuquerque, screenwriter Justin Golding translated his experience into lessons in how to write visually for the screen.





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Acknowledgments

NM Writers thanks our partners, donors, and volunteers who made this evening's dinner possible.

We are immensely grateful to **Carla Mattix** for her generous sponsorship of tonight's speakers, as well as to our big-hearted raffle donors: **AMC's *Dark Winds*, Allan Walter of Rainbow Gate, Santa Fe International Literary Festival, Collected Works Bookstore & Coffeehouse, Garcia Street Books, Susan's Fine Wine and Spirits**, and the **publishers** and **individuals** who filled our "New Mexico Bookshelf" with titles by New Mexico's publishers. Raffle donations help fund the NM Writers grantmaking program.

Shout out to **Lorie Woodmansee of La Fonda**, who again kindly assisted in organizing this event and to the advertisers who support our dinner program.

Finally, *mil gracias* to all of our annual dinner guests. See you next year!



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www.newmexicofoundation.org

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THE 10TH ANNUAL TAOS WRITERS CONFERENCE

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Friday, July 24-Sunday, July 26, 2026



with keynote speaker/instructor **Alexandra Fuller**
Author of *Don't Let's Go to the Dogs Tonight*

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Alexandra Fuller, Jamie Figueroa, Valerie Martínez, Allegra Huston,
Kate Christensen, Sean Murphy, Juan Morales, and many others.

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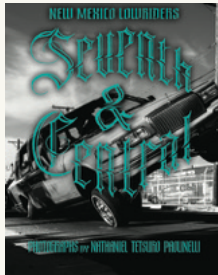
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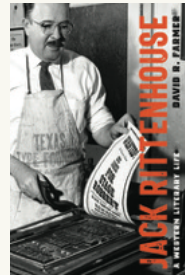
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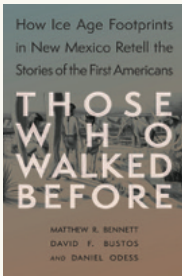
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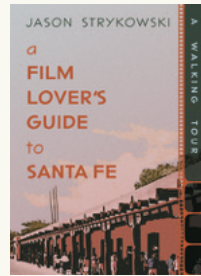
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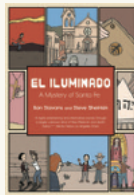
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