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2020 LA Times Festival of Books: Week 1 Preview

Posted on [October 18, 2020](#) by [Casey Lewis](#)



LA Times Festival of Books / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Happy Sunday, L.A.! This morning the Los Angeles Times and the University of Southern California will push forward with the LA Times Festival of Books. In honor of the festival's 25th anniversary, organizers have arranged twenty-five virtual events featuring an assortment of writers, poets, artists, filmmakers, musicians and emerging storytellers to span the course of four weeks. We'll be posting weekly previews and reviews of the festival and its participants. Keep reading for more information on Week 1!

Register [HERE](#). All virtual events are free to the public.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2020

Co-authors Henry Winkler and Lin Oliver Reading from "Lights, Camera, Danger!" with Host Michael Ordoña 10:30am

[Lin Oliver](#)



Henry Winkler and Lin Oliver / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Lin Oliver is a professional writer and television producer from Los Angeles. She completed a B.A. in English at UCLA and UC Berkeley. Following graduation, she taught a single semester of high school before quitting to write children's educational books (fiction and poetry). Oliver co-founded the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, and runs her own children's film and television production company. Before striking out on her own, she spent eleven years writing and producing television series at NBC Universal. Among her numerous published works is the "Hank Zipzer" series co-written with Henry Winkler. *Fun fact: Lin likes to make*

mosaics out of broken dishes.

Recent Comments

- Tequila on The Cat and Fiddle Offers Afternoon Tea
- Selena M on RIP Embers Lounge
- Paula on Rolling Stones Author To Visit Los Angeles
- Jack Lista on Grandmother of Pearl – Roxy Music at the Kia Forum
- David Arnon on Grandmother of Pearl – Roxy Music at the Kia Forum

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watch for upcoming events

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Food Blogs

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- The Minty

LA City Bloggers

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LA Events

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Music Blogs

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- There's Something Hard in There

Michael Ordoña (moderator)



Michael Ordoña / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Michael Ordoña has covered film and television for the LA Times and the San Francisco Chronicle for over ten years. He is also a film reviewer for Common Sense Media and a member of the Critics Choice Association. Ordoña graduated from USC's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. *Fun Fact: Michael is an avid softball player.*

Find Michael: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#); Sources: [Critics Choice Profile](#), [LA Times Profile](#), [SF Gate Profile](#)

Henry Winkler



Henry Winkler and Lin Oliver / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Henry Winkler is a professional actor, director and producer from Manhattan, NY. His first acting role was a character named Billy Budd in an eighth grade school play. After appearing in about thirty television commercials he landed his first major television and film roles in 1974. He played a Brooklyn gang member in "The Lord of Flatbush" and Arthur "Fonzie/The Fonz" Fonzerelli in "Happy Days". Some other notable projects include "MacGyver" (1985), "Sabrina the Teenage Witch" (1996), "Scream" (1996), "The Waterboy" (1998) and "Arrested Development" (2003).

Winkler is a co-founder of The Children's Action Network (CAN), an organization that provides free immunizations to children. He also works with the Annual Cerebral Palsey Telethon, the Epilepsy Foundation of America, the National Committee for Arts for the Handicapped, the Special Olympics, and Toys for Tots. He completed a B.A. at Emerson College (1967), an M.A. at the Yale School of Drama (1970) and received an Honorary PhD in Hebrew Literature from Emerson College (1978). Winkler has received a large collection of awards ranging from a Primetime Emmy and a Golden Globe to the Order of the British Empire bestowed by Queen Elizabeth II.

Winkler's "Hank Zipzer" children's novel series is co-written with Lin Oliver and based on his childhood struggles with dyslexia. *Fun fact: "The Fonz's" jacket hangs in the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C.*

Sources: [Biography.com](#), [IMDB](#), [Penguin Book Profile](#)

Young Adult Fiction: Love, Struggles and What Lies In Between
12:oopm

Brandy Colbert



Brandy Colbert / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Brandy Colbert is a writer, copy editor and professor based in Los Angeles. She was born in Springfield, MO and completed a B.A. in Journalism at Missouri State. She has authored several novels and her short stories and essays have been published in a number of anthologies. Several of her novels are Junior Library Guild Selections. "Little & Lion" was named Best Book of 2017 by Bustle, Buzzfeed, Seventeen Magazine and Vulture (among others), and "Pointe" was named Best Book of 2014 by Book Riot, Buzzfeed, the Chicago and LA Public Libraries, and Publishers Weekly. *Fun fact: Brandy is a lifelong tap dancer.*



Jennifer De Leon / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Jennifer De Leon is an author, editor, speaker and professor based outside of Boston. She completed a B.A. in International Relations at Connecticut College, an M.A. in Teaching at USF's Center for Teaching Excellence and Social Justice, and an M.F.A. in Creative Writing at UMass-Boston. She taught in Boston Public Schools for ten years, held multiple writing residencies in and around the city and is currently an Assistant Professor of English at Framingham State.

De Leon has had a number of essays and short stories published in notable anthologies including the Iowa and Michigan Quarterly reviews. She is the

editor of "Wise Latinas: Writers on Higher Education" (University of Nebraska Press, 2014) and her debut novel, "Don't Ask Me Where I'm From", was published in 2020 (Simon & Schuster/Caitlyn Dlouhy Books). *Fun fact: Jennifer participated in the Teach For America program.*

Find Jennifer: [Website](#); Source: [Website](#)

Shaun David Hutchinson



Shaun David Hutchinson / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Shaun David Hutchinson is an author of young adult fiction, non-fiction, short stories and anthologies. His debut novel, "The Deathday Letter", was published in 2010 by Simon Pulse. Hutchinson is originally from West Palm Beach, FL, and currently resides in Seattle. *Fun fact: Shaun has professional experience designing computer databases, building apps and coding websites.*

Find Shaun: [Website](#); Source: [Website](#)

Zan Romanoff (moderator)



Zan Romanoff / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Zan Romanoff is an author of essays, journalism and young adult fiction based in Los Angeles. Her work has appeared in notable publications including *The Atlantic, Bustle, Buzzfeed, The Cut, The Hairpin, Healthyish, The Jewish Journal, LA Magazine, Lit Hub, and Medium*. *Fun fact: Zan is a Kardashian Culture Critic.*

Find Zan: [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#); Sources: [Website](#)

MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2020

Ayad Akhtar, Author of Homeland Elegies, in Conversation with Reza Aslan

4:00pm

Ayad Akhtar



Ayad Akhtar is an award winning novelist and playwright. He has published two novels and had four plays produced on such stages as Lincoln Center and Broadway. He is the recipient of two Pulitzer Prizes, two Obie Awards, and the Steinberg Playwriting Award, among others.

Akhtar completed a B.A. at Brown University and an M.F.A. at Columbia



Ayad Akhtar / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

University and an M.F.A. at Columbia University. He held fellowships with the American Academy in Rome, MacDowell, the Sundance Institute, and Yaddo – an artist community in Saratoga Springs, NY. He currently serves as the Board Director for Yaddo, a Board Trustee at the New

York Theatre Workshop and PEN America, and will assume the role of President of PEN America in December 2020. *Fun fact: Ayad taught himself French while majoring in theater at Brown.*

Find Ayad: [Website](#); Sources: [New Yorker Interview](#), [Website](#)

[Reza Aslan \(interviewer\)](#)



Reza Aslan / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Reza Aslan is a writer, commentator, professor, producer and religious scholar based in Los Angeles. He earned a B.A. in Religious Studies from Santa Clara University, an M.A. in Theological Studies from Harvard, a PhD in the Sociology of Religions from UC Santa Barbara, and an M.F.A. from the University of Iowa. He has taught at the University of Iowa and Drew University in New Jersey, and is currently a tenured Creative Writing professor at UC Riverside.

Aslan co-founded BommGen Studios, a premiere entertainment brand focused on creative content from and about the Middle East. He is on the Board of

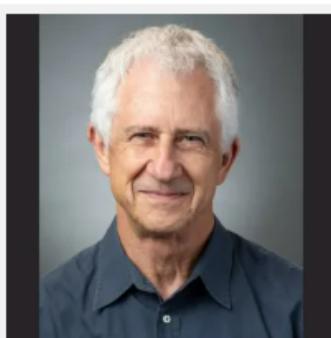
Trustees for the Chicago Theological Seminary and the Yale Humanist Community. He is also a member of the Academy of Religions, the Society of Biblical Literature, and the International Qu'ranic Studies Association. *Fun fact: Reza held the Truman Capote Fellowship in Fiction while completing his M.F.A.*

Find Reza: [Website](#); Sources: [Website](#)

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2020

People Have the Power? Electoral Politics and Democracy, Presented by USC 5:30pm

[Paul Adler](#)



Paul Adler / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Paul Adler has been affiliated with USC's Marshall School of Business since 1991. He has held roles as the Harold Quintin Chair of Business Policy and a professor of management and organization, sociology and environmental studies. Prior to his tenure at USC, he held positions at the Brookings Institution, Columbia University, Harvard Business School and the Stanford School of Engineering. Adler completed his PhD at the University of Picardie. *Fun fact: Paul worked as a research economist for the French Government while completing his PhD program work.*

Sources: [USC Marshall Staff Profile](#)

[Jane Junn](#)



Jane Junn / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Jane Junn is an author, professor and researcher. She completed her M.A. and PhD at the University of Chicago and is currently a professor of political science at USC, the Vice President of the American Political Science Association, and Director of the Association of American Universities Project. She is also a member of the Social Science Research Council's National Research Committee on Elections and Voting, and the National Academy of Science Commission on the U.S. Naturalization Test Redesign.

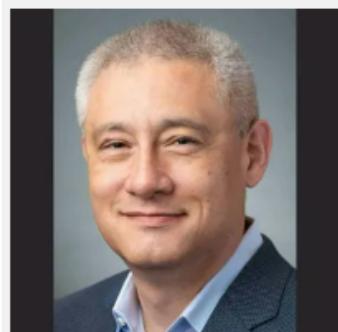
Junn's research focuses on independent voters; political behavior and identity; political participation and public opinion

in the U.S.; polling methods and analysis; racial and ethnic politics; and voter demographics. Her work is supported by the Educational Testing Service, National Science Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, and the Spencer Foundation.

Junn is the author of two books: "Education and Democratic Citizenship in America" (University of Chicago Press, 1996), and "The Politics of Belonging: Race, Immigration, and Public Opinion" (co-written with Natalie Masuoka, University of Chicago Press, 2013). Her research articles have been published in journals including *The American Behavioral Scientist*, *American Politics Research*, and *The DuBois Review*. *Fun fact: Jane was a 1998 Fulbright Senior Scholar at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies in Seoul, South Korea.*

Sources: [CUNY Staff Profile](#), [USC Dornsife Staff Profile](#)

[John G. Matsusaka](#)



John Matsusaka / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

John G. Matsusaka is a writer, professor, researcher and political commentator based in Los Angeles. At USC he teaches in the Marshall School of Business, the Gould School of Law and the Political Science Department of the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences. He has held visiting appointments at Stanford, UCLA, CalTech and the University of Chicago. His research investigates direct democracy; corporate and industrial organization; initiatives, referendums and ballot propositions; political economy; and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election. He has appeared as a political commentator on ABC News, CNN, Fox News, and NPR. His writing

has been published in the *LA Times*, *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post*.

Matsusaka completed a B.A. at the University of Washington and an M.A. and PhD in Economics at the University of Chicago. He is the author of two books: "For the Many or the Few: The Initiative, Public Policy, and American Democracy" (University of Chicago Press, 2004), and "Let the People Rule: How Direct Democracy Can Meet the Challenge of Populism" (Princeton University Press, 2020). *Fun fact: John consulted for the White House Council of Economic Advisers.*

Sources: [Ballotpedia](#), [University of Chicago Press Author Profile](#), [USC Marshall Staff Profile](#), [USC Pressroom](#), [ProMarket Profile](#)

[Bob Shrum \(moderator\)](#)



Bob Shrum / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Bob Shrum is a long-time political strategist and consultant. He began his political career as a speechwriter for NYC Mayor John V. Lindsey (1970-71), Senator George McGovern (1972 presidential campaign), and Senator Ted Kennedy (1980-84). He has advised political campaigns at multiple levels of government, winning thirty senate races, eight bids for governor, eight mayoral campaigns, and one House Speaker/Democratic party leader campaign. Shrum has also consulted on several international campaigns in Israel, the U.K., Ireland and Columbia.

Shrum is a graduate of Georgetown and Harvard Law, and has held teaching positions at NYU, Yale and Boston College. He currently works at USC's Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences in two roles: Director of the Center for the Political Future and the Carmen H. and Louis Warschaw Chair in Practical Politics. He is the author of "No Excuses: Concessions of a Serial Campaigner" (Simon & Schuster, 2007) and his writing has been published in the *LA Times*, *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *Slate*, and *Time*, among others. *Fun fact: Bob was a political advisor to President Bill Clinton during his tenure in office.*

Find Bob: [Twitter](#); Sources: [AAPC Hall of Fame Profile](#), [USC Dornsife Staff Profile](#)

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2020

The Honorable Jerry Brown and Jim Newton, Author of Man of Tomorrow,

Gustavo Arellano (interviewer)



Gustavo Arellano / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Gustavo is an investigative reporter from Orange County, CA. He spent six years as the editor of *OC Weekly* before moving to the *LA Times* to be a features columnist focusing on the Latinx experience and its impact on the LA region. Gustavo is also a contributor at KCRW, has made appearances on "The Colbert Report", "Nightline", NPR's "Talk of the Nation", and "The Today Show", and lectures at CSU Fullerton in the Chicana & Chicano Studies Department.

Gustavo has authored three books: "Taco USA: How Mexican Food Conquered America" (Scribner, 2012), "Orange County: A Personal History" (Scribner, 2008), and "iAsk A Mexican!" (Scribner Press, 2007) which was based on a nationally syndicated column he wrote at *OC Weekly*. The column received the Association of Alternative Weeklies' Award for Best Column in 2006 and 2008. Gustavo himself has received numerous accolades including the LA Press Club's President's Award (2007) and the California Latino Legislative Caucus' Spirit Award (2008). *Fun fact: Gustavo resigned from OC Weekly because the publication's owners asked him to lay off half the staff and he refused to do so.*

Find Gustavo: [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#); Sources: [KCRW Profile](#), [LA Times Staff Profile](#), [Media Moves Article](#), [Simon & Schuster Author Profile](#)

The Honorable Jerry Brown



The Honorable Jerry Brown / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Jerry Brown was born in 1938 in San Francisco to Bernice Layne and Edmund G. Brown, future Governor of California (1959-67). After graduating from St. Ignatius High School he spent several years hopping between public universities and a Jesuit Seminary. He ultimately graduated from UC Berkeley in 1961 with a B.A. in Classics. In 1964 he completed his J.D. at Yale Law.

Post-graduation Brown clerked for California Supreme Court Justice Mathew Tobriner. From there he held the following roles: LACC Board of Trustees (1967-71); California Secretary of State (1971-75); California Governor (1975-83);

Chair of the State Democratic Party of California (1989-91); Mayor of Oakland (1999-2007); California Attorney General (2007-11); California Governor (2011-19); and U.S. Bankruptcy Judge in the Eastern District of Louisiana (2017-20). His political ideology prioritizes fiscal austerity, criminal deterrence, and environmental issues.

Brown has been active in humanitarian and community service projects throughout his life. He was the 1987 CARE Ambassador of Good Will during the Bangladesh floods; spent time working with Mother Theresa at the Home of the Dying in India; founded the Oakland School for the Arts; and hosted a radio talk show called "We The People" that investigated alternative perspectives of current social issues and sponsored programs focused on improving sustainable food production and access to quality education for all. *Fun fact: Jerry led delegations to both China and the Soviet Union.*

Find Jerry: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#); Sources: [Ballotpedia](#), [Britannica Biography](#), [LAEB Profile](#), [Website](#)

Jim Newton



Jim Newton is a career journalist, educator and author based in Pasadena. After graduating from Dartmouth he began his career as a clerk to James Reston at *The New York Times*. From there he went to work as a reporter at the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Finally in 1989 he moved to the *LA Times* for over a decade, where he held a number of positions from reporter to editor at large. He wrote about the LAPD, Mayor Richard



Jim Newton / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Riordan's administration, federal law enforcement, and state and local politics. In 2015 he began teaching Communication Studies and Public Policy at UCLA. He is the founder and editor-in-chief of *Blueprint*, a UCLA magazine centered on policy challenges in California and Los Angeles.

Jim authored four books: "Justice For All" (Riverhead, 2006), "Eisenhower: The White House Years" (Doubleday, 2011), "Worthy Fights: A Memoir of Leadership in War and Peace" (Penguin Press, 2014), and "Man of Tomorrow: The Relentless Life of Jerry Brown" (Little, Brown and Company, 2020). He was a member of both *LA Times* teams that won Pulitzer Prizes for the 1992 coverage of the LA riots and the 1994 coverage of the Northridge earthquake.

Find Jim: [Twitter](#); Sources: [Blueprint Website](#), [LA Times Staff Profile](#), [UCLA Luskin Staff Profile](#)

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2020

Roberto Lovato, Author of *Unforgetting: A Memoir of Family, Migration, Gangs, and Revolution in the Americas* in Conversation with Esmerelda Bermudez
4:30pm

[Esmerelda Bermudez \(interviewer\)](#)



Esmerelda Bermudez / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Esmerelda Bermudez is an *LA Times* reporter who produces narrative stories about Latinx members of the LA community. She was born in El Salvador, raised in Whittier and completed a B.A. in Print Journalism at USC. Prior to the *LA Times* she worked as a reporter for the *Oregonian* in Portland. In 2006 Bermudez won the Guillermo Martinez-Marquez Award for Latin American Reporting in Mexico and Guatemala. She was also a member of the *LA Times* staff team that won a Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of the 2015 San Bernardino Terror Attack. This year, the National Association of Journalists presented her with the "Si Se Puede" Award.

Find Esmerelda on Twitter: [@BermudezWrites](#), [@LATbermudez](#); Sources: [USC Annenberg News Report](#), [LA Times Staff Profile](#)

[Roberto Lovato](#)



Roberto Lovato / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Roberto Lovato is an educator, writer and journalist who has reported on violence, terrorism, the drug war, and refugee crises in the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, France, Haiti, Mexico, the United States and Venezuela. His writing has appeared in the *Associated Press*, *The Boston Globe*, *Foreign Policy Magazine*, *The Guardian*, *Guernica Magazine*, the *LA Times* and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, among others. Roberto is a co-founder of #DignidadLiteraria and a former Executive Director of CARECEN.

As a social and organizational strategist Lovato led the Central American Resource Center during the 1994 Prop 187

Campaign, helped conceive the "Drop The I-Word" campaign, co-founded the Central American Studies Program at CSU Northridge (now its own department), and co-founded [presente.org](#).

Lovato is based at the Writer's Grotto in San Francisco. He authored "Unforgetting: A Memoir of Family, Migration, Gangs and Revolution in the Americas". *Fun fact: Roberto is a former Fellow at UC Berkeley's Latinx Research Center.*

Find Roberto: [Website](#); Sources: [Pulitzer Center Profile](#), [SF Grotto Member Profile](#), [Website](#)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2020

Rachel Howzell Hall



Rachel Howzell Hall / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Rachel Howzell Hall is a thriller and mystery author from Los Angeles. She earned a B.A. in English and American Literature from UC Santa Cruz and has worked at the ACLU of Southern California, City of Hope, the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, and PEN Center USA West. She is a featured writer on NPR's "Crime In the City", serves on the Board of Directors for the Mystery Writers of America, and participated as a mentor in the "Writer-to-Writer" program operated by the Association of Writers and Writing Programs.

Find Rachel: [Twitter](#), [Website](#); Sources: [Website](#)

Attica Locke

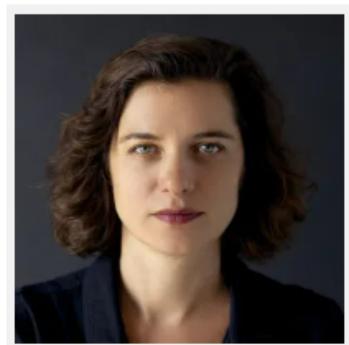


Attica Locke / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Attica Locke is a screenwriter, producer and novelist from Houston and based in LA. She graduated from Northwestern University and was a fellow at the Sundance Institute's Feature Filmmaker's Lab. Attica wrote and produced "When They See Us" (Netflix) and "Little Fires Everywhere" (Hulu) and has authored five novels. She received the Ernest Gaines Award for Literary Excellence, and Edgar Award for her novel "Bluebird, Bluebird", and a Harper Lee Prize for Legal Fiction for "Pleasantville".

Find Attica: [Website](#); Sources: [Goodreads Author Profile](#), [Website](#)

Ivy Pochoda



Ivy Pochoda / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

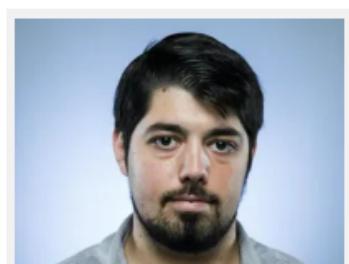
Ivy Pochoda is an author and educator from Brooklyn and currently based in LA. She authored four novels, two of which have won numerous awards: "Wonder Valley" (Ecco, 2017) won the 2018 Strand Critics Award for Best Novel and was selected as Book of the Year by NPR and the *LA Times*; "Visitation Street" (Ecco, 2013) won the Prix Page America in France, was named Amazon's Best Book of 2013 and was a Barnes and Noble "Discover Great New Writers" selection.

Pochoda's writing has been published in the *LA Review of Books*, the *LA Times*, *The New York Times*, *Vogue* and *The Wall Street Journal*. She collaborated

with Kobe Bryant on a middle-school-aged fantasy novel called "Epoc: The Tree of Ecrof" (Granity Studios, 2019), and she teaches Creative Writing at Studio 526 in Skid Row. *Fun fact: Ivy is a formerly world ranked squash player.*

Find Ivy: [Website](#); Sources: [LA Review of Books Contributor Profile](#), [Inkwell Management Client Profile](#), [Website](#)

James Queally (moderator)



James Queally is an *LA Times* staff writer who covers crime and policing in Southern California, Los Angeles criminal courts and the LA District Attorney's office. Prior to the *Times*, he spent five years at *The Star-Ledger* in New Jersey reporting on the Newark Police Department and other crime news. His journalism has also been published in *The New York Daily News*, *The Philadelphia*



James Quearly / Photo courtesy of LA Times Festival of Books

Enquirer, The Staten Island Advance and The Trenton Times. His short stories have appeared in "All Due Respect", "Literary Orphans" and "Thuglit".

New Jersey. He was a member of the *LA Times* staff team that won a Pulitzer Prize for its coverage of the 2015 San Bernardino Terror Attack. He published his debut novel this year, entitled "Line of Sight" (Polis Books, 2020).

Find James: [Website](#); Sources: [LA Times Staff Profile](#), [LinkedIn Profile](#), [Website](#)

SPECIAL NOTES:

The virtual video sessions will not be open to live questions. You can submit questions in advance when you register for individual events.

At this time the 2021 Festival of Books is scheduled for April 17 + 18, 2021 on the USC campus.

For more information, please visit: [LA Times Festival of Books Website](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#)

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