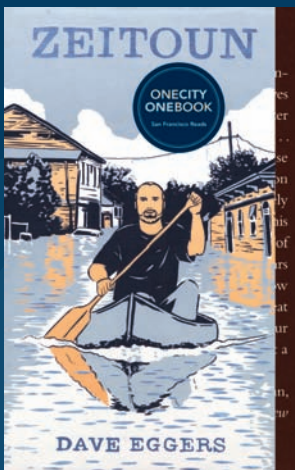


# ONECITY ONEBOOK

San Francisco Reads

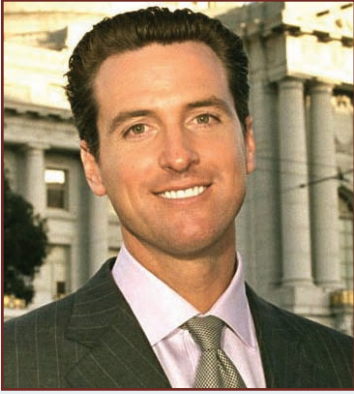


Fall 2010  
[sfpl.org/OneCityOneBook](http://sfpl.org/OneCityOneBook)

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# WELCOME



## A message from Mayor Gavin Newsom

For the sixth year in a row I am pleased to welcome you to the San Francisco Public Library's **One City One Book: San Francisco Reads**, our city's annual communal celebration of the joys of reading.

Join thousands of other readers at book store events, library discussions, film screenings and dozens of other programs focusing on Dave Egger's award winning book **Zeitoun**.

## A message from City Librarian Luis Herrera

Welcome to our popular citywide book club **One City One Book: San Francisco Reads**. This year's selection is Dave Eggers's *New York Times* best-selling book **Zeitoun**. This true story chronicles longtime New Orleans residents Abdulrahman and Kathy Zeitoun and their struggles during and after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans. As the *New York Times Book Review* said "Eggers' tone is pitch perfect—suspense blended with just enough information to stoke reader outrage and what is likely to be a typical response: How could this happen in America?" We are honored to have San Francisco author Dave Eggers participating in many events at book stores, the library and school visits. I know this book will inspire many people.

Thank you for being part of One City One Book: San Francisco Reads.

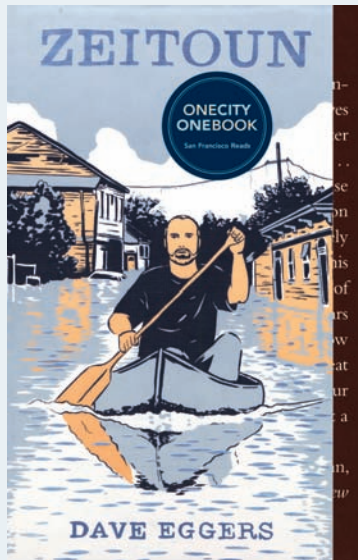


# ZEITOUN BY DAVE EGGERS

## About The Book

Abdulrahman Zeitoun is a Syrian-born entrepreneur who runs a busy painting company in New Orleans. He is a devout Muslim, married to a native of Baton Rouge who had converted to Islam before meeting Zeitoun. As Hurricane Katrina barrels toward New Orleans, his wife Kathy takes the children out of town, while Abdulrahman stays to keep an eye on their house and several rental properties they own. In the first couple of days, his decision to stay behind seems a good one, and even after the levees break and the streets and houses fill with water, he is able to help several people who have stayed behind but now need to be rescued. As the National Guard enter the city, armed with machine guns and surveillance helicopters, things begin to go very wrong for Abdulrahman. He is taken into custody and put into a temporary jail—a cage, in fact—hastily erected behind the Greyhound station. There he is subject to strip searches, and he witnesses beatings and other mistreatment of fellow prisoners, and is denied the right to phone his wife and let her know where he is.

Zeitoun's ordeal is the main subject of this harrowing nonfiction book, while Eggers enriches the shocking tale of injustice with a richly layered account of Zeitoun's early life on the coast of Syria, his large and loving family, his relationships with his friends, employees, and neighbors.



## About the Author



Dave Eggers is the author of six previous books, including *What Is the What*, a finalist for the 2006 National Book Critics Circle Award and winner of France's Prix Médicis Etranger. That book, about Valentino Achak Deng, a survivor of the civil war in southern Sudan, gave birth to the Valentino Achak Deng Foundation, run by Mr. Deng and dedicated to building secondary schools in southern Sudan. His most recent book, *Zeitoun*, was awarded the *LA Times* Book Award, the American Book Award, the Northern California Book Award, the Robert F. Kennedy Distinguished Honor, and the Muslim Public Affairs Council's Media Award. Eggers is the founder and editor of McSweeney's, an independent publishing house based in San Francisco that produces a quarterly journal,

a monthly magazine (*The Believer*), and *Wholphin*, a quarterly DVD of short films and documentaries. In 2002, with Ninive Calegari, he co-founded 826 Valencia, a nonprofit writing and tutoring center for youth in the Mission District of San Francisco. Local communities have since opened sister 826 centers in Chicago, Los Angeles, Brooklyn, Ann Arbor, Seattle, Boston and D.C. In 2004, Eggers taught at the University of California-Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism, and there, with Dr. Lola Vollen, he co-founded *Voice of Witness*, a series of books using oral history to illuminate human rights crises around the world. In 2010, Eggers founded Scholarmatch, an online forum that connects college-bound students with donors who want to stay connected with the future leaders of America. Eggers has also been honored by The Muslim Public Affairs Council, The Council on American-Islamic Relations, The Arab Cultural Community Center, and The Arab American Institute.

# ONE CITY ONE BOOK

## September

### Wednesday, Sept. 8 6 p.m.

Main Library, Latino/Hispanic  
Community Meeting Room  
(415) 557-4277

### Wednesday, Sept. 15 7 p.m.

Excelsior Branch Library  
4400 Mission St. (at Cotter)  
(415) 355-2834

### Wednesday, Sept. 22 6:30 p.m.

Glen Park Branch Library  
2825 Diamond St. (near Bosworth)  
(415) 355-2858

### Disaster Preparedness Coalition for Animals

Do you know how to prepare your pet for a natural disaster? Does your pet have an earthquake emergency kit? Members of the Disaster Preparedness Coalition for Animals presents a workshop on how to prepare and take care of your pet during a disaster.

### Saturday, Sept. 11 2-3 p.m.

Western Addition Branch Library  
1550 Scott St. (at Geary)  
(415) 355-5727

### *Zeitoun: A Sad Tale of Civil Liberties Abuse*

A panel discussion with Julia Mass of the ACLU and others (speakers TBD) discuss the civil liberty issues in *Zeitoun* as well as parallels with the Japanese during World War II and other civil liberty issues today.

### Tuesday, Sept. 14 12 noon

Green Apple Books  
506 Clement St.  
(415) 387-2272

Author reading with Dave Eggers

### Tuesday, Sept. 21 12 noon

Books Inc.  
Opera Plaza  
601 Van Ness Ave.  
(415) 776-1111

Author reading with Dave Eggers

### Tuesday, Sept. 21 6 p.m.

Main Library, Koret Auditorium  
(415) 557-4277

### *A Village Called Versailles*

Film & discussion on Hurricane Katrina. This film tells the incredible story of a little known, tight knit New Orleans community in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. A panel discussion follows the film.

### Wednesday, Sept. 22 7 p.m.

Excelsior Branch Library  
4400 Mission St.  
(415) 355-2834

### Excelsior Arts & Culture Salon: *Dark Water Rising*

Film & discussion on the Hurricane Katrina pet rescue. Over 50,000 dogs and cats were left behind in New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. This film tells the epic tale of America's first-ever major animal rescue.

### Saturday, Sept. 25 3:30-5:30 p.m.

Potrero Branch Library  
1616 20th St. (near Connecticut)

### I Remember: Collecting Stories of the People You Love and Admire

Oral historian Basya Petnick teaches a workshop on collecting oral histories in your family and community. Topics include what is oral history? What kind of stories do you want to collect? What is the best way to preserve them and share them?

### Wednesday, Sept. 29 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Mission Bay Branch Library  
960 Fourth St.  
(415) 355-2838

*Zeitoun* book discussion group

### Tuesday, Sept. 28 7 p.m.

Books Inc.  
*Zeitoun*, book discussion group  
at all Books Inc. stores:

Opera Plaza, S.F.  
601 Van Ness  
(415) 776-1111

Castro, S.F.  
2275 Market St.  
(415) 864-6777

Marina, S.F.  
2251 Chestnut St  
(415) 931-3633

Berkeley  
1760 4th St.  
(510) 525-7777

Mountain View  
301 Castro St.  
(650) 428-1234

Palo Alto  
Town & Country Village  
(650) 321-0600

Alameda  
1344 Park St.  
(510) 522-2226

Books Inc. will donate 15% of the book price for the books sold in September and October to the Friends of the San Francisco Public Library.

# ONE CITY ONE BOOK

## October

### Tuesday, Oct. 5 12:30 p.m.

Book Passage: Ferry Building  
1 Ferry Plaza  
(415) 835-1020

Author Talk with Dave Eggers

### Tuesday, Oct. 5 6 p.m.

Main Library, Koret Auditorium

Discover Jazz: From Jelly Roll to  
the Modern New Orleans Groove

Join us when Cory Combs, Director of Education  
for SF Jazz presents a jazz history of New Orleans.  
Special performance by Dee Spencer. Sponsored  
by SF Jazz.

### Thursday, Oct. 7 6 p.m.

Mechanics Institute Library  
57 Post St.  
(415) 393-0114

Zeitoun book discussion group

### Tuesday, Oct. 12 Reception: 7 p.m. Program: 8 p.m.

Modern Times Books  
888 Valencia St.  
(415) 282-9246

Dave Eggers & Jordan Flaherty,  
author of *Floodlines*, in conversation

### Tuesday, Oct. 12 6:30 p.m.

Main Library, Latino/Hispanic  
Community Meeting Room

Frommer's Travel to  
New Orleans

Frommer's travel author, Diana Schwam,  
discusses the best places to stay, dine  
and listen to jazz in New Orleans. A book  
sale by Book Bay follows the event.

### Thursday, Oct. 14 6 p.m.

Main Library, Koret Auditorium

Dave Eggers  
in conversation with Beth Lisick

Join us for an insightful discussion between Dave  
Eggers and author Beth Lisick. Q&A and a book  
signing with Dave Eggers and Beth Lisick follows.  
Book sale by Book Bay.

### Saturday, Oct. 16 2:30 p.m.

Chinatown Branch Library  
1135 Powell St. (near Jackson)  
(415) 355-2888

Disaster Planning  
with the Red Cross

Learn how to prepare an  
earthquake survival kit and  
other helpful information  
for disaster planning.  
In Cantonese

### Sunday, Oct. 17 1:30 p.m.

Main Library, Latino Hispanic Community Meeting Room

I Remember: Collecting Stories  
of the People You Love and Admire

Oral historian Basya Petnick teaches a workshop on  
collecting oral histories among families and communities.  
Topics include what is oral history? What kind of stories  
do you want to collect? What is the best way to preserve  
them? What is the best way to share them?

### Wednesday, Oct. 20 12-1 p.m.

University of San Francisco Center for Pacific Rim  
Gleeson Library - Seminar Room 209

Book club discussion of *Zeitoun*.  
Everyone welcome, (415) 422-2236

### Thursday Large Screen Videos 12 noon

Main Library, Koret Auditorium

One City Four Films: Hurricane Katrina

Oct. 7: *Dark Water Rising*

Oct. 14: *When the Levees Broke, Acts I & II*

Oct. 21: *When the Levees Broke, Acts III & IV*

Oct. 28: *Hurricane Katrina: The Storm That Drowned a City*  
(episode of PBS's series NOVA)

# READ & DISCUSS ZEITOUN

## One City One Book Discussion Questions

1. "Notes About This Book" (xv) gives a sense of how the book was written, whose point of view it reflects, and Eggers's efforts at accuracy and truth in his depiction of events. By choosing to portray the response to the hurricane through its effects on one family, what kind of story (or history) does he achieve?
2. The book opens with "Friday, August 26," an expository chapter that introduces us to Zeitoun's family life and his business life, the two very interconnected. What are some of the ways in which the descriptions here draw you in as a reader, and make these people and their situation real? Why is the timeline a good structural choice for this story?
3. Kathy has grown up as a Southern Baptist. Drawn to Islam through her childhood friend Yuko, she decides to convert. Why, when she comes to visit wearing her hijab, does her mother tell her, "Now you can take that thing off" (57)? Why does the prayer from the *Qur'an* quoted on page 51 have a strong effect on her? What does her reaction to the evangelical preacher who mocks Islam and says that Kathy's temptation to convert was the work of the devil (65-66), say about Kathy's character and intelligence?
4. Do Abdulrahman, Kathy and their children make up an unusual American family, or not? How would you describe the relationship between Zeitoun and Kathy, in marriage and in business? What effect does their religion have on the way others in the community see them?
5. Why has Eggers woven into the story accounts of Zeitoun's past in Syria, his upbringing, his brother Mohammed, the champion swimmer, his brother Ahmad, and their close bond? What effect does this framework of family have on your perception of Zeitoun's character, his ethics, his behavior?
6. The plight of the neighborhood's abandoned dogs comes to Zeitoun's attention as "a bewildering, an anger in their cries that cut the night into shards" (93). The next day, he sets out in the canoe and tries to do what he can

for animals and people trapped by the flood. How does Zeitoun feel about what he is doing? How does he think about these days after he has been imprisoned (262-64)?

7. Discuss what happens when Zeitoun and the others are forced to get into the boat and are taken into custody. Is it clear why they are being arrested? What assumptions are made about Zeitoun and the other three men (275-87)?

8. Part IV (203-90) tells the story of Zeitoun's imprisonment. Here we learn in great detail how Zeitoun is denied the right to call Kathy, how his injured foot is not attended to, how the other men are beaten, stripped, and starved, how he prays constantly, yet loses hope. What is the impact, as you read, of this narrative?

9. "Zeitoun is a more powerful indictment of America's dystopia in the Bush era than any number of well-written polemics" (Timothy Egan, *New York Times*, August 13, 2009). Would you agree with this statement? Can *Zeitoun* be read as a contribution to the history of hurricane Katrina and the failure of government to handle the disaster effectively?

10. Discuss Kathy's situation, and her actions once she learns where Zeitoun is. The aftermath is more difficult, and she still suffers from physical and psychological problems that

seem to be the result of post-traumatic stress. What was the most traumatic part of her experience, and why (319)?

11. Given that the other men who were imprisoned with Zeitoun were held much longer than he was, and that Nasser lost his life savings, is it surprising that these men were not compensated in any way for their time in prison (320-21)?

12. What is Zeitoun's feeling now about what happened? How does he move forward into the future, as expressed in the book's closing pages (322-25)?

Unless otherwise stated, this discussion guide is reprinted with the permission of *Vintage*. Any page references refer to a USA edition of the book, usually the trade paperback version, and may vary in other editions.



# WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

## The Zeitoun Foundation

The Zeitoun Foundation was created in 2009 to aid in the rebuilding of and ongoing health of the city of New Orleans, and to help ensure the human rights of all Americans. Beginning in the fall of 2009, the Zeitoun Foundation began to distribute funds garnered from the sale of *Zeitoun*, a book written by Dave Eggers about the life of Abdulrahman and Kathy Zeitoun and their trials and tribulations after Hurricane Katrina. The Zeitoun Foundation is honored to have given more than \$220,000 in grants so far.

[zeitounfoundation.org](http://zeitounfoundation.org)

## Nonprofit groups that have received grants:

Voice of Witness  
The Porch  
Meena Magazine  
Innocence Project NOLA  
Muslim American Society  
Rebuilding Together  
The Green Project  
Louisiana Capital Assistance Center  
New Orleans Lens

Islamic Relief USA  
New Orleans Center for Creative Arts  
The New Orleans Institute  
The Neighborhood Story Project  
Catholic Charities  
Muslim Student Association  
The Wesley United  
The Jeremiah Group

## *Zeitoun* by Dave Eggers has been honored by:

The Muslim Public Affairs Council  
The Council on American-Islamic Relations  
The Arab Cultural Community Center  
The Arab American Institute

# SUGGESTED READING

If you enjoyed *Zeitoun*, you might also like these books:



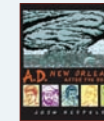
*The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast*  
by Douglas Brinkley



*The Executioner's Song*  
by Norman Mailer



*In Cold Blood*  
by Truman Capote



*A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge*  
by Josh Neufeld



*Come Hell or High Water*  
by Michael Eric Dyson

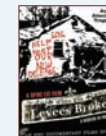


*Voices from the Storm*  
by Lola Vollen and Chris Ying, eds.



*The Emperor*  
by Ryszard Kapuscinski

You may also enjoy these films:



*When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts*  
by Spike Lee



*Trouble the Water*  
by Tia Lessin and Carl Deal



*Dark Water Rising*  
by Mike Shiley



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## 2010 Selection Committee

Calvin Crosby  
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West Coast Live/Book Group Expo

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Marcia Schneider (chair)  
Chief of Communications, Collections and Adult Services, SFPL

Kevin Smokler  
Co-founder/Chief Evangelist for BookTour.com & editor of Bookmark Now

Oscar Villalon  
Freelance Book critic

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