One City One Book: San Francisco Reads Is Here!

After so much time apart, it's time for the City to come together for everyone's favorite literary event: One City One Book. San Francisco Reads, which encourages everyone to read the same book at the same time and join in lively discussions through a variety of public programs for the months of March, Women's History Month, and April, Sexual Violence Awareness Month. Our series of programs for the months of March, Women's History Month, and April, Sexual Violence Awareness Month.

Know My Name: A Memoir (Penguin Random House). This year's program coincides with the Library's annual Asian/Pacific Islander American Heritage Celebration and Sexual Assault Awareness Month—a cause championed by Miller. Start reading and join us in community this spring.

One City One Book (OCOB) is SFPL’s largest literary event of the year, and we are pulling out all the stops for our 2021 selection, Know My Name: A Memoir. We can't wait to share this important book with our city and to engage in lively discussions with you at the many events we have planned this spring.

In addition to our marquee event with OCOB author Chanel Miller, you can also look forward to a series of public programs for the months of March, Women's History Month, and April, Sexual Violence Awareness Month.

In March and April we will feature local writers, artists, healers and organizations who assist survivors of sexual assault. Partnering with local organizations and City agencies plays a large part in the OCOB initiative. Look for events with the SF Human Rights Commission’s Office of Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention team (SHARP), Department on the Status of Women, SF Women Against Rape, Mirror Memoirs, along with other local organizations, artists, authors and educators.

Find a full line up of programs and presentations throughout March and April on our website.

Author: One City One Book Author Chanel Miller in conversation with journalist Robynn Takayama – March 16, 6 p.m.

Panel: Guerrilla Girls: The Art of Behaving Badly with Frida Kahlo and Käthe Kollwitz – March 24, 7 p.m.

Panel: “Feel, What I Felt” Women Creators – March 30, 7 p.m.

Panel: International Transgender Day of Visibility – March 29, 7 p.m.

A partnership with Mirror Memoirs

Know My Name Book Clubs

Bite Size Book Club Continues

While our first meeting took place on Jan. 3 with chapters 1-5, there is still plenty of time to take part in the discussion. We will meet on the first Sunday of the month leading up to Chanel Miller’s virtual library appearance on March 16. Join us!

Suggested Chapters:

Feb. 7 – Chapter 6-12
March 7 – Chapter 13 – Victim Impact Statement

More Opportunities to Join the Conversation

Book Club: Chanel Miller, Know My Name – Feb 16, 6 p.m.
Book Club: Chanel Miller, Know My Name – March 13, 11 a.m.

Watch “I Am With You,” a powerful animated film short available on Miller’s website: chanel-miller.com/i-am-with-you. Consider the way this medium augments the reading experience. How do Miller’s illustrations and voiceover add to your understanding of the memoir?

What change in perspective or understanding about the world has been unlocked in you through reading this book?

“

When I listened to her, I understood: You have to hold out to see how your life unfolds; because it is most likely beyond what you can imagine... Good things and bad things come from the universe holding hands. Wait for the good things to come.”

Chanel Miller. Photo: Mariah Tiffany

One City One Book 2021

Know My Name Book Club Discussion Questions

What were your initial expectations of the book? What surprised you? What made the strongest first impression on you?

Epigraphs—the quotations that appear at the beginning of a book—often set a theme or tone or offer a point of reflection for a reader. OCOB provides SFPL with a wonderful platform to connect with younger audiences around the critical topics in Miller’s book. We are proud to be able to partner with Mission and Balboa High School, City College of San Francisco and University of San Francisco to bring Miller as a special guest to young scholars for their own private author talk.

Books are provided to the students and a special curriculum is developed around the topics of sexual assault, consent, feminism, writing, art and more.

On March 16, 6 p.m. don’t miss the big event—local journalist Robynn Takayama will facilitate a candid conversation with Chanel Miller about her book, art and her personal experience with sexual trauma and the California court system. In celebration of their new title, Guerrilla Girls: The Art of Behaving Badly, Guerrilla Girls Frida Kahlo and Käthe Kollwitz discuss the book and their legacy, followed by a Q&A session. We will feature a dynamic panel of fierce women artists titled “Feel, What I Felt,” which will keep us inspired and informed throughout the event.

As a memoir, Miller’s life in its aftermath, the justice system—paid for in full clarity. What stands out the most to you?

What were your initial expectations of the book? What surprised you? What made the strongest first impression on you?

What are some examples that stand out to you?

What was striking or surprising to you about the biases Miller experienced during her trial?

While this book can be simplified and characterized as an account of assault and trauma, it also contains many examples of profound ways, big and small, in which people care for and look after each other. What are some examples that stand out to you?

One recurring thread through the memoir—the rape, Miller’s life in its aftermath, the justice system—is the idea of power. What does having power mean? Where is it? How can it be taken away, and what are ways Miller found to reclaim it?

One of the most notable features of Miller’s writing is her ability to capture emotion. In a 2020 interview with The Cut, Miller reflects, “[W]hen I thought about a really potent emotional memory related to the assault, my editor would challenge me to come up with another memory in my life that had a similar emotional core—even though it may not have been the same experience at all, it could be from childhood, from anywhere. Showing [the reader] that experience would give them a more accessible entry point into that feeling. Instead of saying ‘this happened to me,’ you identify the emotional core of what happened and figure out other moments in your life that had similar cores, and use those to provide concrete scenes for the reader.” What were some entry points into the emotional world of Know My Name that stand out to you?

An exhibition by Miller is currently on view at The Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, easily visible from the street. Miller states that the Museum was the first institution that approached her to say, “We know your story. Now, what else would you like to say?” Rather than, “Rehash your story. And continue to mine that one event for wisdom.” “If you’ve had the opportunity to see the mural, what do you think Miller is saying through her art?”

What do you notice about the way that Miller describes her body throughout the book and the relationship she has with her physical self?

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One City One Book 2021

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About the Author

Chanel Miller, the Artist

As part of its transformation and expansion, during summer 2020 the Asian Art Museum unveiled I was, I am, I will be, a three-part mural by Chanel Miller, who, in addition to being an author, is also a talented artist. Miller represents healing from trauma as an ongoing process: reflecting on the past, being mindful in the present and envisioning the future. The power of knowing, yet playful “characters” in I was, I am, I will be represent different stages of coping with the uncertainties and challenges of life — “unfinished sentences,” as the artist calls them, encouraging visitors to reflect on their own experiences. Visible from Hyde Street outside the Museum — day and night — I was, I am, I will be is one of several public artworks commissioned by the Museum to engage the surrounding community.

To complement the installation at the Asian Art Museum, patrons can visit the exterior of the Main Library to see a small exhibit of Miller’s work located in the vitrines along Grove Street, near the corner of Hyde.

About the Book

Universally acclaimed, rapturously reviewed and an instant New York Times bestseller, Chanel Miller’s breakout memoir gives readers the privilege of knowing her not just as Emily Doe, but as Chanel Miller — the writer, the artist, the survivor, the fighter (The Wrap). Her story of trauma and transcendence illuminates a culture biased to protect perpetrators, indicting a criminal justice system designed to fail the most vulnerable, and ultimately, shining with the courage required to move through suffering and live a full and beautiful life.

Request a copy of Know My Name and pick up at any SFPL To Go site or purchase your own copy at friendssfpl.org/shop.html.

“Compelling and essential... Miller reminds us that our stories are worth telling, that the names and the lives attached to those names matter.”
—San Francisco Chronicle

“Triumphant... Know My Name evokes a woman whose spirit hasn’t been broken—a study in what it means to strike back, not in revenge, but in reclamation.”—O Magazine

Moved by Know My Name? Here Are Some Other Suggestions

Michelle Bowdler’s Is Rape A Crime? A Memoir, An Investigation, and A Manifesto

In 1984, the Boston Sexual Assault Unit was formed as a result of a series of break-ins and rapes that terrorized the city, of which Bowdler’s own horrific rape was the last. Twenty years later, after a career of working with victims like herself, Michele decides to find out what happened to her case and why she never heard from the police again after one brief interview.

Rachel Louise Snyder’s No Visible Bruises: What We Don’t Know About Domestic Violence Can Kill Us

A journalist explores America’s epidemic of domestic violence and how it has been misreported, sharing insights into what domestic violence portends about other types of violence and what countermeasures are needed today.

T. Christian Miller’s and Ken Armstrong’s A False Report: A True Story of Rape in America

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists present the true story of two detectives who learned up to discern the truth about a case involving a teen who was charged with falsely reporting a rape, an investigation that revealed the work of a serial rapist in multiple states.

Edited by Roxane Gay, Not That Bad: Dispatches From Rape Culture

This collection of first-person essays selected and edited by the author of Bad Feminist discusses rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment with contributions from Ally Sheedy, Gabrielle Union, Amy Jo Burns, Claire Schwartz and Bob Shacochis.

Drawing Power: Women’s Stories of Sexual Violence, Harassment, and Survival: A Comics Anthology

More than 60 female comics creators share their personal experiences with sexual violence and harassment through new and misremembered comics.

Indelible in the Hippocampus: Writings From the #MeToo Movement

Among the first books to emerge from the #MeToo movement, this book is a truly intertextual collection of essays, fiction and poetry by Black, Latina, Asian, queer and trans writers.

Thank you to Our 2020/2021 OCOB Selection Committee and Partners

Selection Committee
- Michelle Jeffers, Chief of Community, Programs and Partnerships, SFPL
- Alejandro Gallegos, Adult Engagement Manager, SFPL
- Denise Schmidt, Collections & Cataloging Manager, SFPL
- Anissa Malady, Adult Engagement Coordinator, SFPL
- Susan Mall, Vice President, San Francisco Library Commission

- Byron Spooerre, Library Director, Friends of the San Francisco Public Library
- Lorraine Stamps, Director of First-Year Programs and Family Engagement Division of Student Life, University of San Francisco
- Corinna Wolf, Art, Culture, Education Consultant
- Ann Seaton, Director of Operations California Independent Booksellers Alliance
- Bob Dotria, Books Inc.

Selection Criteria
We search for a book that meets as many of the following criteria as possible:
- High literary quality
- Reflective of universal issues facing San Franciscans
- Mirrors the diversity of San Franciscans
- Connects to San Francisco either through the content or perhaps because the author is from San Francisco;
- Available in key languages;
- Currently in print and available in large quantities;
- Appeals to adults and high-schoolers;
- Available in paperback;
- Capable of sparking provocative discussions;
- Lends itself to engaging public programs around the book.

Media Sponsors
- KQED
- Arts LiQuake

Partners
- Friends of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco
- Friends of the San Francisco Meadows Library
- Friends of the San Francisco Main Library
- Friends of the San Francisco Suburban Libraries

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