

# Tickets on sale for MJCCA Book Festival

By **CARSON COOK**

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DUNWOODY, Ga. — The 28th annual Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta (MJCCA) Book Festival will bring more than 45 renowned authors to Dunwoody from Oct. 30 to Nov. 18.

The event's organizers said this year's festival will feature the genres attendees have come to expect, like historical fiction and Holocaust narratives, along with themes that are especially topical this year, such as female empowerment, the opioid epidemic, immigration and anti-Semitism.

"We have a finite amount of program space, so we only have a certain number of authors we can bring," Book Festival Director Pamela Morton said. "We always look to the trending topics of the day."

Pulitzer Prize-winning New York Times reporter Jodi Kantor will talk about how she broke the Harvey Weinstein sexual harassment story and its role in the #MeToo Movement, and the final speakers, Hillary Rodham Clinton and Chelsea Clinton, will be speaking about their collaboration, "The Book of Gutsy Women."

Akbar Gbajabiamila, a former NFL player and host of "American Ninja Warrior," will talk about growing up as the son of Nigerian immigrants in south central Los Angeles. Tziporah Salamon, a style icon born to Hungarian Holocaust survivors who immigrated to Israel, then New York, will present a one-woman show, entitled "The Fabric of My Life."

Bari Weiss, another New York Times journalist, will discuss her book "How to Fight Anti-Semitism." Weiss held her bat mitzvah at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh that became the site of a mass shooting a year ago — a wakeup call that inspired her book.

"We have books that are appealing to families, like 'Ninja Warrior,'" said Susie Hyman, one of the two co-chairs that head the festival. "We have politics. We have sports. We have timely subject matters, whether it's anti-Semitism or opioids. There's something for everyone."

The team of volunteers and MJCCA staffers who put on the annual festival spend months selecting authors and preparing the programs.

A team of volunteers flies to New York each spring to meet with hundred of authors from the Jewish Book Network. After hearing authors make their pitch, they make a list of about 60 authors they'd like to bring to the festival. Back in Dunwoody, a team of about 100 volunteers narrows down the list to a few dozen.

"[The New York trip] is just the most amazing experience," said Deena Profis, the other co-chair. "It's an amazing group of people we bring to New York because we're business. Our goal is to bring the best of the best, and the committee we take to New York is a well-oiled machine."

The book festival also finds local authors through online submissions and works with publishers to bring in the big-name speakers like the Clintons, former Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley and Olympic figure skater Adam Rippon.

As exciting as those big names are, Morton said every presentation is a treat.

"The marquee names are great draws — Henry Winkler, the Clintons, Nikki

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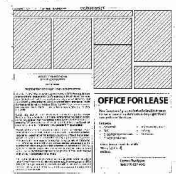
Haley and Candace Bushnell," she said. "They're amazing. Little needs to be said because they are who they are, but there's a lot to be said about others that you may never have heard of before. We walk out of every program going, 'Wow! That was the best one ever.'"

Once the list of authors is selected, organizers go about arranging the programs. Most authors are matched with another for a joint presentation, based on a shared genre or the themes their books explore.

"There have been authors that have been paired together that didn't know each other, but have since enjoyed that camaraderie of being together," Hyman said.

There is also a committee to find moderators to interview the speakers, many of whom are remarkable figures in their own right, such as Lois Reitzes, the host of "City Lights" and 11 Alive reporter Melissa Long.

Now in the final weeks before the festival, volunteers and staff are selling tickets, stuffing gift bags for the authors,



promoting the event and practicing how to say the speakers' names.

As demanding as the job is, Hyman said she's not ready for it to be over.

"I've loved every second of it," Hyman said. "It's just a labor of love. We get to meet these authors; it's a wonderful group of people we work with — it's just a win-win."

From Oct. 30 to Nov. 18, 2019, more than 13,000 people from across the Southeast are expected to gather at the MJCCA in Dunwoody to engage with and listen to their favorite local, national and international authors.

"Of course, this festival is a literary extravaganza," Morton said. "But I hear people say to us, 'I don't read anymore' or 'I'm just too busy to read. I have kids at home,' and we always say you don't have to read to come to the festival. We always want people to walk away feeling like they learned something new or were entertained."

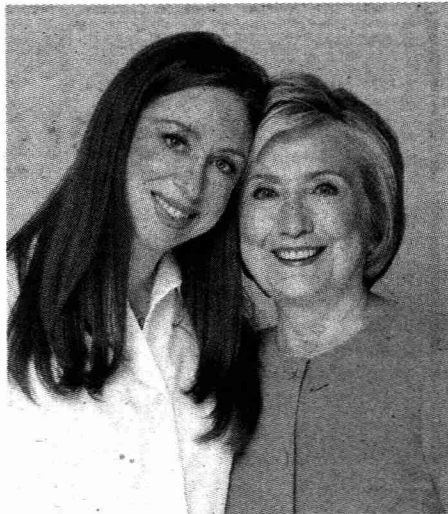
All events will be held at 5342 Tilly Mill Road, Dunwoody. Guests can purchase tickets for each individual event or purchase a series pass for access to most of the November events. Some events are free.

Call the MJCCA Box Office at 678-812-4002, email [bookfestival@atlantajcc.org](mailto:bookfestival@atlantajcc.org) or visit [atlantajcc.org/bookfestival](http://atlantajcc.org/bookfestival).



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