

Q&A with poet Arielle Estoria

Southern California spoken-word poet Arielle Estoria is the author of two self-published poetry collections, 2014's "Vagabonds and Zealots" and 2017's "Write Bloody Spill Pretty," as well as an in-demand keynote speaker. At 12:30 p.m. Feb. 12, Estoria will present a virtual program on unlocking one's gifts and finding beauty within through words and storytelling. Her presentation is part of Central Oregon Community College's inaugural Black History Month slate of events, which begins at 12:30 p.m. Friday with a program by Bend artist, poet and musician M0sley W0tta.

The free, all-virtual Black History Month events are part of COCC's broader Season of Nonviolence programming, featuring events honoring non-violent advocacy for human rights. All programs will be presented via Zoom, and registration is required. Visit tinyurl.com/nonseason to see all events and register.

Q: How did you get connected with COCC? Did they track you down and ask you to do the program?

A: Blakelee (Evans, COCC's Afro-Centric program coordinator) actually went to my same university (Azusa Pacific University), so he was familiar with me through college.

Q: What do you have planned for the program?

A: I chatted with Blakelee a little bit, just about what the setting and what the tone is, and what kind of messages that are trying to be conveyed, so I'm going to do a patch of speaking, too, and then also a more an interactive workshop as well. I find that storytelling in itself, there is a bridge that is connected when we can hear an "us" and a "we" and not just an "I." I'll be speaking a little bit on my own experiences as a black woman, what that looked like for me growing up, and then also give space for listeners or audience to do the same for themselves with different prompts. One of the prompts is a poem I like to call an "I am" poem, where they describe themselves using aspects of nature, adjectives, simile and comparison and also ingredients. So when you think of making up who you are as a human being, what are those ingredients that are included in who you are. And so I will share quotes as well from people



Submitted photo

Spoken word poet Arielle Estoria will lead an online program on Feb. 12 as part of COCC's inaugural Black History Month series.

in my own life who have led me to understanding my identity and who I am and how that looks when operating in the world.

Q: Nice. How did you arrive at spoken word?

A: My background is mostly in theater. At first, a lot of my poetry started as monologues ... usually historical figures, like Emmett Till's mother and Coretta Scott King. I started to write these monologues, (from) the perspective of them. I figured if, for theater, I can step into the vulnerability of other people, then for poetry I can step into my own, and share my own, and share my own story. I didn't start really getting involved

with spoken word until I got to Azusa Pacific, and it just became how I interpreted the world the most. ... Poetry just became how I process the world, myself, space and everything in between.

Q: You have two self-published collections out now, right? Do you have another book coming out? I saw your tweet the other day about waiting to hear from your editor.

A: I do. I'm in the process of writing, right now, and this will be my first non-self-published work of art. I'll actually be signed with a publisher, HarperOne Books, and so this will be my first book underneath a publisher. (It will be published in Spring 2022.)

Q: Congratulations. Are the poems taking a certain shape, or a certain theme?

A: Yeah, so the theme, or the conversation, is the unfolding. It's just my own personal journey with unraveling old narrative, relearning what it looks like to establish yourself as an adult. ... Sometimes, they don't always match who your families or your parents believe. It's been that journey of figuring out what that looks like for me. It's this constant process of growth and expansion, so there will be poems, and inside ... six different categories, like "The Illuminating," "The Eclipsing," "The Returning." Those are the general ideas I've had so far.

David Jasper, The Bulletin

national bestsellers

Here are the bestsellers for the week that ended Saturday, Jan. 23, compiled from data from independent and chain bookstores, book wholesalers and independent distributors nationwide.

HARDCOVER FICTION

1. The Invisible Life of Addie Lurie. V.E. Schwab. Tor
2. The Vanishing Half. Brit Bennett. Riverhead
3. Neighbors. Danielle Steel. Delacorte
4. Before She Disappeared. Lisa Gardner. Dutton
5. The Return. Nicholas Sparks. Grand Central
6. The Midnight Library. Matt Haig. Viking
7. The Push. Ashley Audrain. Viking/Dorman
8. A Time for Mercy. John Grisham. Doubleday
9. Deadly Cross. James Patterson. Little, Brown

10. Ready Player Two. Ernest Cline. Ballantine

HARDCOVER NONFICTION

1. A Promised Land. Barack Obama. Crown
2. Keep Sharp. Sanjay Gupta. Simon & Schuster
3. Greenlights. Matthew McConaughey. Crown
4. Caste. Isabel Wilkerson. Random House
5. Forgiving What You Can't Forget. Lysa TerKeurst. Nelson
6. Untamed. Glennon Doyle. Dial
7. Fast This Way. Dave Asprey. Harper Wave
8. Rebuilding Milo. Aaron Horschig. Victory Belt
9. Magnolia Table, Vol. 2. Joanna Gaines. Morrow
10. A Swim in a Pond in the Rain. George Saunders. Random House

MASS MARKET

1. The Lost and Found Bookshop. Susan Wiggs. Avon
2. A Minute to Midnight. David Baldacci. Grand Central
3. Shadows in Death. J.D. Robb. St. Martin's
4. The Inn. Patterson/Fox. Grand Central
5. An Irish Wish. Nora Roberts. Silhouette
6. Bitter Pill. Fern Michaels. Zebra
7. Finally You. Debbie Macomber. Mira
8. Moral Compass. Danielle Steel. Dell
9. Preacher's Carnage. William W. Johnstone. Pinnacle
10. Bridgerton: The Duke and I (TV tie-in). Julia Quinn. Avon

TRADE PAPERBACK

1. Business Made Simple. Donald Miller.

HarperCollins Leadership

2. Quit Like a Woman. Holly Whitaker. Dial
3. Bridgerton: The Duke and I (TV tie-in). Julia Quinn. Avon
4. The Dutch House. Ann Patchett. Harper Perennial
5. Home Body. Rupi Kaur. Andrews McMeel
6. Blindside. Patterson/Born. Grand Central
7. The Step-by-Step Instant Pot Cookbook. Jeffrey Eisner. Voracious
8. News of the World (movie tie-in). Paulette Jiles. Morrow
9. The Truths We Hold. Kamala Harris. Penguin
10. Burn After Writing (pink). Sharon Jones. TarcherPerigee