



**CHELSEA DISTRICT LIBRARY**  
BEST SMALL LIBRARY IN AMERICA

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

AUTHOR: Lori Coryell, Director  
CONTACT: Patty Roberts, Head of Marketing  
PHONE: 734-475-8732 x 216  
E-MAIL: [proberts@chelseadistrictlibrary.org](mailto:proberts@chelseadistrictlibrary.org)

**Chelsea, Mich., March 11, 2019**

**CDL Artist in Residence Luis J. Rodriguez highlights the power of art and words to transform lives.**

The Chelsea District Library (CDL) is honored to host Luis Rodriguez as this year's Artist in Residence. Rodriguez is an award-winning poet, memoirist, youth and arts advocate, community activist, and former Los Angeles Poet Laureate.

During his April 25–27 residency, Rodriguez will work with local poets and aspiring authors, spend a day mentoring creative writing students at Chelsea High School, facilitate a community conversation, and be a featured author at the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Midwest Literary Walk on April 27. His visit is made possible through the generous support of the Chelsea Community Foundation and the Friends of CDL.

Rodriguez is best known for his national bestseller *Always Running: La Vida Loca, Gang Days in L.A.* This vivid memoir explores gang life and cautions against the death and destruction that haunts its participants. Writing in the *New York Times Book Review*, Gary Soto said, "Rodriguez's account of his coming of age is vivid, raw... fierce and fearless... Here's truth no television set, burning night and day, could ever begin to offer."

He is also the author of several acclaimed collections of poetry. He earned a Hispanic Heritage Award for Literature and was named one of the 50 leaders worldwide deemed "Unsung Heroes of Compassion" by the Dalai Lama.

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Rodriguez's visit is part of the Library's efforts to provide opportunities for self-expression and connection to the larger world. As a young man, Rodriguez found redemption through art and claims that books saved him from a life of violence, prison, and drugs. Today, his work is testament to the power of words to evoke positive change on a personal level and throughout communities.

In a Community Poetry Critique Program on Thursday, April 25, Rodriguez will lead writers on a journey of self-discovery and self-expression. Chelsea area poets are invited to have their work critiqued by Rodriguez in 30-minute sessions of manuscript feedback at Zou Zou's Cafe. Works must be submitted to Rodriguez in advance. To sign up, receive a time slot, and for detailed instructions on submissions contact [serendipity.bkstore@gmail.com](mailto:serendipity.bkstore@gmail.com).

Rodriguez has lectured and led workshops on social justice, youth development, the transformative power of the arts, gang intervention and prevention, substance abuse and prevention, and mass incarceration.

He will guide attendees in a conversation to identify our community's challenges and strengths and examine and explore workable solutions at 7 p.m., April 25. Discussion topics will be generated by the audience. The public is invited to join in this civic conversation, which takes place in the Library's McKune Room and is free of charge.

Rodriguez will spend the day at Chelsea High School working in the classroom with creative writing students on April 26. He will share his story with teens and work intensively with them on their writing. He is uniquely tuned into the challenges these students face and will work to positively address them and find creative outlets through the power of their words.

Local poet Douglas Smith will facilitate a conversation with Rodriguez at 6:30 p.m., April 26 at Serendipity Books, 113 West Middle Street, Chelsea. Rodriguez will share insights on the tools and techniques of writing and take questions at this up-close and personal event. This program is open to the public and free of charge. (Catch Douglas Smith reading from his own poetry at 7 p.m., April 3 at Serendipity Books.

Rodriguez wraps up his visit to Chelsea as a featured author at the Midwest Literary Walk on April 27. During this afternoon's celebration of literature, he will talk about his work and share his compelling story with the community. For more information on the Walk, visit [midwestliterarywalk.org](http://midwestliterarywalk.org).

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CDL is especially grateful for the support of the Chelsea Community Foundation and the Friends of the Chelsea District Library to help make this program possible. We would also like to give special thanks to our community partners Serendipity Books and Zou Zou's Cafe.

About Us: Chelsea District Library is a not for profit organization whose mission is engage, inspire, and equip through evolving services and resources. The Library currently serves 15,010 residents in the Chelsea area including the City of Chelsea plus Dexter, Lima, Lyndon, and Sylvan townships. More than 16,000 individuals visit the Library each month. For more information visit [www.chelseadistrictlibrary.org](http://www.chelseadistrictlibrary.org).

About Chelsea Community Foundation: The Chelsea Community Foundation supports a wide variety of activities benefiting education, arts and culture, health, human services, community development, and civic affairs. Founded in 1995, the Chelsea Community Foundation has a permanent charitable endowment of approximately \$2.3 million through gifts from individuals, families, and businesses. The Foundation has awarded nearly \$1.5 million grants to nonprofit organizations working to address community needs and opportunities that improve the quality of life in the city of Chelsea and surrounding areas. The Chelsea Community Foundation is an affiliate fund of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan. For more information, visit [www.chelseafound.org](http://www.chelseafound.org).

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