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Chelsea, Mich., April 30, 2019

11th Annual Midwest Literary Walk Draws Standing Room Only Crowds

Last Saturday, aspiring writers, poets, and bibliophiles gathered in downtown Chelsea for the Chelsea District Library's 11th Annual Midwest Literary Walk. Each year, the library welcomes renowned authors to historic venues in Chelsea for a celebration of the written word. This year's lineup included National Book Award Finalist Min Jin Lee, former LA Poet Laureate Luis J. Rodriguez, and award-winning journalist and debut novelist Anissa Gray.

This year's event had record breaking attendance, with hundreds of book lovers and standing room only at each venue. Library Board member Charlie Taylor was "amazed again at the huge attendance and excellent reception for the [Midwest Literary Walk] this year. I don't really see how it could continue to get better each year, but it certainly seems to do so."

Min Jin Lee spoke about her latest novel, *Pachinko*, a beautiful, multigenerational novel that follows four generations of a Korean family living in Japan from 1910-1989, through war, persecution, loss, and love. Ms. Lee's readings from her novel and honest discussion of her arduous writing process moved the audience. One attendee called her presentation "moving, emotional, funny, [and] wonderful" while another said "Wow! Outstanding, articulate, bright, engaging, excellent presenter—impressive to have her here to Chelsea."

Luis J. Rodriguez shared from his poetry collections and his own challenging journey from a life of gang violence and drugs to his role as author, mentor, and activist. One attendee said it was "interesting to hear such heartfelt feelings expressed. [Rodriguez is] a very special, courageous man." Another found motivation for his own writing: "[Rodriguez] inspired me to get back into writing [and] reading poetry [and] spoken word." Rodriguez's participation in this year's Midwest Literary Walk was made possible through the generous support of the Chelsea Community Foundation.

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Anissa Gray concluded the Lit Walk with a discussion and readings from *The Care and Feeding of Ravenously Hungry Girls*, her debut novel that explores family, community, and the long reaching effects of incarceration on both. Gray's fresh work was appreciated by the crowd. One attendee said he was "very pleased to be introduced to this author—thank you for being a part of this day." Another said that Gray's novel is now "on [her] list to read" and that she "loved [Gray's] readings—such raw honesty."

The 2019 Midwest Literary Walk was made possible by the following wonderful sponsors and partners: Serendipity Books, Literati Bookstore, Chelseamich.com, Friends of the Chelsea District Library, WDET 101.9, Chelsea Community Foundation, PBS Books, Astral Road Media, and Detroit Public TV.

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.

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.

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