

The PEN is mightier

The PEN America World Voices Festival hosts a compelling lineup addressing gender and power today.
By Dorkys Ramos

LIT LOVERS, UNITE: PEN America World Voices Festival returns with 150 writers and artists from 40 nations who engage the city in a series of public discourses. This year's event focuses on the issues of gender and power under the Trump administration—a theme originally picked before November 8.

"We chose this year's theme before the election, imagining that we would be celebrating the advances in women's and LGBTQ rights around the world and issuing a renewed call to continue this progress," says Rob Spillman, festival chair. "Instead, the festival now opens at a time of backlash against these hard-earned rights, in the shadow of

new assaults on free expression."

The festival's prelude, *A House Divided* (Sun 30 3–4:30pm), takes place in the Cooper Union's Great Hall, the same space Abraham Lincoln delivered his speech of the same name. Opening night stands defiant with *United Against Hate* featuring Patti Smith, Ani DiFranco, Andrew Solomon and others (Mon 1 7–8:30pm).

At the Town Hall, novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and *The Daily Show* host Trevor Noah discuss how they've juggled their multiple identities (May 3 8:30–9:30pm). Later in the week, Samantha Bee and Russian and American journalist and author Masha Gessen close the festival at the Cooper Union's



Noah



Smith

Great Hall by presenting the similarities between the Trump administration and other authoritarian regimes (May 7 at 6pm).

Bars and bookstores host international writers and readers during Lit Crawl (May 5 6–9pm), a literary bar crawl with an after-party at KGB Bar, and the Lower East Side's Tenement Museum throws its own open house with readings from emigrant women (May 3 6:30–9pm).

If you miss any of the 70 events, browse through PEN's archives after the festival, listen to its podcasts, and keep fanning the literary flames. And if you feel inspired to find your own voice, sign up for one of the free writers' workshops on the schedule, with your pen at the ready.

→ PEN America World Voices Festival is Sun 30–May 7 at various locations (worldvoices.pen.com). Free–\$45.

LIES TO TELL TOURISTS

In May, New York's cherry blossoms are in full bloom—a spectacle that lasts through mid-month. But there's one NYC cherry tree more extraordinary than most. On Centre Street, not far from the historic African Burial Ground National Monument, sits the infamous stump at the core of a legend: You've probably heard about six-year-old George Washington confessing to chopping down a tree, saying, "I cannot tell a lie, I did it with my little hatchet." That very stump is memorialized on the sidewalk, where it's been safely encased in bronze for more than 250 years.

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