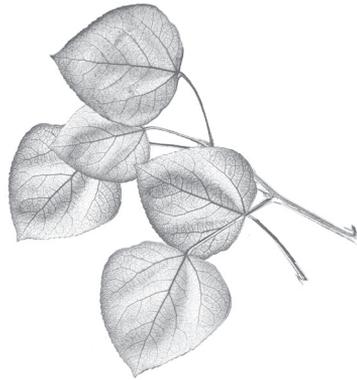


Program

A QUESTION OF CHARACTER



SUN VALLEY WRITERS' CONFERENCE

June 30 – July 3, 2017

P.O. Box 957 • Ketchum, ID 85340 • (208) 726-5454

Office: 551 Leadville Avenue North, Ketchum

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SVWC is a 501(c)(3) Idaho nonprofit corporation

A QUESTION OF CHARACTER

FRIDAY, JUNE 30

10:00 AM Registration Opens
Big Tent

2:00 – 3:00 PM Breakout Sessions (*locations listed on the back of your conference pass*)

- SPAIN IN OUR HEARTS: AMERICANS IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR
The Spanish Civil War continues to exert both a tragic and romantic pull on our imaginations. It is the conflict at the heart of Ernest Hemingway's novel *FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS*, and is now the subject of a book by journalist and historian **ADAM HOCHSCHILD**. The war, which lasted from 1936-1939, drew some 3,000 American volunteers who joined the fight against the fascist forces led by the ultimately victorious Francisco Franco. Hochschild focuses on a dozen of those Americans, weaving their stories together in a compelling, almost novelistic narrative. He will take us to Spain and back to those heady, heartbreaking days.
- The Royals
If you loved *THE CROWN*, you will want to hear author **SALLY BEDELL SMITH** share the real stories of the British royal family in all its quirks and complexities. Author of the new book, *PRINCE CHARLES: THE PASSIONS AND PARADOXES OF AN IMPROBABLE LIFE*, and of an earlier volume on his mother, *ELIZABETH THE QUEEN*, Smith's work aims to humanize the often misperceived duo. She will tell us about the strange, privileged lives of the Queen and the Prince, about the ties that bind them, but also about their striking differences.

FRIDAY, JUNE 30 *continued*

2:00 – 3:00 PM

Breakout
Sessions
(*continued*)

- THE UPSTARTS: How the New Silicon Valley is Changing the World
The 2008 economic crash left Silicon Valley reeling and, as always, in search of the “next big thing.” Journalist **BRAD STONE**, author of the recent book *THE UPSTARTS*, offers a close look at this moment and the entrepreneurial masterminds who managed to capitalize on it. At the intersection of business and culture, Stone will give us an insider’s perspective on major players such as Travis Kalanick of Uber, Brian Chesky of Airbnb, and other smart, driven, and yet often tragically flawed people who are upending industries and changing our world.
- New Voices
This session is one of our perennial favorites. It is our chance to introduce you to a group of new young writers you might not be familiar with—yet. In a literary celebration filled with recognizable and established authors, our focus here is to highlight those at an earlier stage of their creative lives. So come hear **DREW CALVERT**, **MAYA HLAVACEK**, **IMBOLO MBUE** and **CALLAN WINK** as they read from their fiction and talk about their ambitions and their fears and about what they see, and hope for, ahead.

3:30 – 4:30 PM

Sun Valley Suite

“Music needs air, sunlight, and liberty to be alive. It is only then that it will impart to us surprising secrets.”

– Wanda Landowska

Join cellist/writer **MARK SALZMAN** as he performs favorite selections from Bach, Albinoni, Saint-Saens, and perhaps even Lin-Manuel Miranda in an open tent in Idaho, where air, sunlight and liberty are plentiful. Rumor has it that wine may be served to emphasize the liberty part. In the spirit of the conference’s theme, *A Question of Character*, he will also read character-revealing excerpts from essays by Chinese medical students in the 1980s, juvenile hall inmates in the 1990s, and seventh-graders in Los Angeles today.

FRIDAY, JUNE 30 *continued*

3:15 – 5:15 PM
Upper Green

Come join old friends and new for a no-host cocktail reception before the evening talk.

5:15 – 6:30 PM
Pavilion

WORLD WAR I AND AMERICA: TOLD BY THE AMERICANS WHO LIVED IT

To open the 2017 Sun Valley Writers' Conference, we turn to Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer **A. SCOTT BERG**, the editor of a new Library of America anthology of writings by American observers and participants in World War I. Timed to coincide with the centenary of America's entry into that war, the collection features the work and voices of 88 men and women, from nurses and soldiers to such well-known authors as Edith Wharton, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, and W.E.B. Du Bois. Searing, poignant, and evocative, the pieces taken together highlight many of the issues we are wrestling with today. When should America intervene in conflicts around the world? How does racial injustice here in the U.S. compromise our moral leadership? With music and readings from the anthology, Berg will bring that pivotal time—and those themes—to vivid life.

SATURDAY, JULY 1

8:00 – 9:00 AM Continental Breakfast

Lodge Terrace

9:00 – 10:00 AM Breakout Sessions (*locations listed on the back of your conference pass*)

- From Page to Screen

How hard is it to watch a book you have written become a movie? Do you ache for lost nuance, the beauty of your words, the characters you carefully brought to life on the page?

These are some of the questions for **A. SCOTT BERG**, whose 1978 National Book Award-winner, *MAX PERKINS: EDITOR OF GENIUS*, became a 2016 film starring Colin Firth as the legendary editor of such major American writers as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Thomas Wolfe. Using film clips to illustrate, Berg will talk about how his biographical book finally made it to the screen and about his work as consulting producer on the upcoming Amazon series based on Fitzgerald's *THE LAST TYCOON*.

- Poetry and the Love of Strangers

In this intimate literary hour, former U.S. Poet Laureate **BILLY COLLINS** will dig deep into his personal trove of favorite poems—his own and those of others—to illuminate, through reading aloud and discussion, how poetry works to engage and connect its readers. Bring your questions and the name of a poet who won't leave you alone, one who has come to haunt your life in a way that only the best poets can.

- Talking with People We *Really* Disagree With

In researching her latest book on the American right wing over five years, **ARLIE RUSSELL HOCHSCHILD** tried to turn off her own political and moral alarm system and to feel, instead, a great curiosity about Tea Party Trump voters in Louisiana, who seemed to her on the other side of an “empathy wall.” On fishing trips, at gumbo cook-offs and meetings of Republican Women of Southwest Louisiana, she encountered a wide range of reactions to her presence from the right. She was also surprised by reactions from the left, among whom some told her, “I’d be so mad, it would be hard to listen” or “why aren’t they curious about us?” Hochschild was led to reflect on how to encourage relaxed encounters with “the other,” and on the paralinguistic ideas we hold about communication when we say what we say to the other.

SATURDAY, JULY 1 *continued*

Breakout
Sessions
(*continued*)

- Freedom of the Press in the World Today
For the last 25 years, **KATI MARTON**—herself the daughter of two Hungarian journalists who were jailed for their writings—has been traveling the globe on behalf of the Committee to Protect Journalists, the nonprofit organization that promotes press freedom worldwide. Marton, who recently returned from a CPJ mission to Ukraine and Brussels, will discuss what has changed and what has not during this past quarter century, where the greatest threats to press freedom exist today, and what we as citizens (and writers) can do to help protect this most vital of institutions.
- The Books that Made Me a Writer
Come hear **IMBOLO MBUE** talk about the books that helped shape her as a writer. In her beguiling debut novel, **BEHOLD THE DREAMERS**, winner of the 2017 PEN/Faulkner Award, she tells the story of a young Cameroonian couple starting a new life in New York just as the Great Recession arrives. She writes with wit and tenderness not only about these struggling immigrants, but also about the family of the Lehman Brothers executive who hires them, in a book *The New York Times* called “savage and compassionate in all the right places.” Mbue says that empathy is at the base of her drive to be a writer, a quality she learned from the books of Frank McCourt, Toni Morrison, Andrew Solomon and others. She will talk about their work, and her own, in a conversation with **JEFFREY BROWN** of the *PBS NewsHour*.
- The Unlikeable Autobiographical Heroine
Novelist and former television comedy writer **MARIA SEMPLE**, author of **WHERE'D YOU GO**, **BERNADETTE** and **TODAY WILL BE DIFFERENT**, will freely and happily discuss one of her very favorite things about her job—namely, writing stories built around unlikeable autobiographical heroines. Why on earth does she do this, and what's her secret to doing it with such great success? Come and find out for yourselves.

SATURDAY, JULY 1 *continued*

9:00 – 10:00 AM

Breakout
Sessions
(*continued*)

- Depression

Author and Professor of Clinical Psychiatry **ANDREW SOLOMON** won the National Book Award for his seminal volume **THE NOONDAY DEMON: AN ATLAS OF DEPRESSION**. Drawing on his own experiences with depression and interviews with fellow sufferers, doctors and scientists, policymakers and politicians, drug designers and philosophers, Solomon reveals the subtleties, the complexities, and the agony of the disease. Join Solomon for a talk about this most cruel and pervasive mental illness—a talk that promises to be as intimate as it is profound.

- The Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams

Born in 1775 London, Louisa Adams was raised as many wealthy English girls were raised: to be married. Her marriage to John Quincy Adams, however, took her on a journey that she never could have expected. She experienced life in palaces and on farms and, in the White House, as the wife of the sixth president of the United States. That literal journey was matched by the journey of her mind. The love story of Louisa and John Quincy Adams was complicated, one that is brought to vivid life by historian and journalist **LOUISA THOMAS**. She traces the extraordinary and unexpected path of a shy, ambivalent, and sometimes contrary woman, who became not just a savvy partner to her husband, but also a strong human being in her own right.

- The Enduring Saga of Patty Hearst

It is one of those American crime stories that has taken on a mythic dimension. In his recently released book, **AMERICAN HEIRESS: THE WILD SAGA OF THE KIDNAPPING, CRIMES AND TRIAL OF PATTY HEARST**, author and TV analyst **JEFFREY TOOBIN** recreates—in all its bizarre particulars—the tale of the upper-class princess turned gun-toting radical. The early 1970s were a tumultuous time. People were taking to the streets; there was anger and angst over the issues of class and race and the war in Vietnam. In the midst of all of this, the saga of Patty Hearst riveted the country. And it still does. Jeffrey Toobin will tell us why.

SATURDAY, JULY 1 *continued*

10:30 – 10:35 AM

Pavilion

A Poem by **BILLY COLLINS**

10:35 – 11:30 AM

Pavilion

Revisiting THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

In his novel **THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD**—one of the most celebrated works of literature in recent years—**COLSON WHITEHEAD** re-imagines the institution of slavery through the fantastical journey of Cora, a runaway slave. The “underground railroad” she travels though is a literal one—trains and tracks beneath the soil, carrying her to strange, surreal places where freedom is an illusion and safety always temporary. Join Whitehead as he discusses how he came to tackle this monumental and harrowing subject as a novel and about the bold, creative decisions he made as he brought this idea and these characters to unforgettable life.

12:00 – 1:00 PM

Pavilion

H IS FOR HAWK

In her wholly original memoir, **H IS FOR HAWK**, the poet and historian **HELEN MACDONALD** recounts the story of how, in the wake of losing her beloved father, she withdraws from the human world. A longtime falconer, she decides to raise a young goshawk, a vicious and massive bird of prey notoriously difficult to train. Here is Macdonald’s initial description of her new charge, whom she names Mabel: “A reptile. A fallen angel. A griffon from the pages of an illuminated bestiary.” Macdonald will tell us of the fierce, winged companion who helped tame her own wild and ragged grief.

1:00 – 2:30 PM

Lower Green

Lunch

SATURDAY, JULY 1 *continued*

2:30 – 3:30 PM Breakout Sessions (*locations listed on the back of your conference pass*)

- Can We Solve the Global Water Crisis?
We are facing a dramatic shortage of the very thing that makes all life possible: water. Nearly four billion people—about 66 percent of the world’s population—live without sufficient access to fresh water for at least one month of the year. **JAY FAMIGLIETTI**, a professor at the University of California at Irvine and senior water scientist at the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, will talk us through this environmental crisis and tell us what, if anything, can be done about it.
- A Lightbulb, Two Chairs and Two Microphones
Sun Valley interrogates **CRAIG JOHNSON**, the creator of *Walt Longmire*. Craig Johnson, in a Q&A with Sun Valley’s own **VAN GORDON SAUTER**, will reflect on the blend of literary, western and mystery fiction that is his unique stock-in-trade. If you have a cowboy hat, feel free to sport same.
- Trump, Putin, and the New World Disorder
The U.S.-Russian relationship has entered a new and uncertain phase. Our president came into office determined to improve it, but that looks increasingly difficult. A combination of American politics, disarray in Europe, the war in Syria, and the Kremlin’s strategy of weakening alliances like NATO and the 70-year-old, U.S.-led liberal world order cloud the future. **ANNE TAYLOR FLEMING** will talk with **STROBE TALBOTT**, former deputy secretary of state and president of the Brookings Institution, about what he sees ahead.
- The Media and the Presidency
A natural tension always exists between the media and those in power. They need each other and resent each other. That’s been true back to the time of the Founders. But the relationship between the current occupant of the White House and those charged with reporting on him has escalated to a full-tilt battle. What has brought us to this turn? What are the implications for the country and its democracy? We have invited two longtime journalists to discuss these issues: **EVAN THOMAS**, a writer and editor for 33 years at *TIME* and *Newsweek* (much of that time in Washington, D.C.) and **JANE MAYER**, *New Yorker* staff writer and former White House correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*. Their conversation will be moderated and joined by **JEFFREY BROWN**, senior correspondent for the PBS *NewsHour*.

SATURDAY, JULY 1 *continued*

4:00 – 5:00 PM

Pavilion

IT'S WHAT I DO: A PHOTOGRAPHER'S LIFE OF LOVE AND WAR

Looking at the piercing images captured by renowned photojournalist **LYNSEY ADDARIO**, so many shot in the world's war zones, is to think of the famous line from Yeats: "A terrible beauty is born." Photographing over the past 20 years for *The New York Times*, *National Geographic* and *TIME* magazine, she has given us indelible images of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; the genocide in Darfur; the refugee crisis; and the civil war in Libya where she was kidnapped by pro-Gaddafi forces in 2011. She will talk about her remarkable life recounted in her recent memoir, *IT'S WHAT I DO: A PHOTOGRAPHER'S LIFE OF LOVE AND WAR*, and tell us about the exhilaration and fear of working in dangerous places, and about how she balances the call of her profession with a personal life that includes a husband and a young son in London. Above all, front and center on our big screen, will be her striking photographs.

5:30 – 6:30 PM

*Pavilion
and
Lawn*

The Supreme Court in the Age of Trump

What will the Supreme Court—and its crucial decisions—look like in the years ahead? There is no better guide to this question than **JEFFREY TOOBIN**, longtime staff writer for *The New Yorker* and CNN senior legal analyst, and author of seven books, including *THE NINE*, his captivating examination of the people who decide the law of the land. The Court, he says, has always been a deeply political body; the justices will inevitably bring their own judicial tilt to the table. But the potential effects of today's hyper-partisan climate concern him. What can we expect during the tenure of Trump? And ultimately, just how central is this one relatively small institution to the direction of our democracy?

DAVID
HALBERSTAM
MEMORIAL
LECTURE

SUNDAY, JULY 2

8:00 – 9:00 AM Continental Breakfast

Lodge Terrace

9:00 – 10:00 AM Breakout Sessions (*locations listed on the back of your conference pass*)

SAM MOTT
MEMORIAL
FELLOWSHIP

- Up Close: A Photojournalist Breaks Down Her Craft
The often dangerous circumstances under which photojournalists routinely work give them an approach to their craft unique among professional photographers. Join one of the world's best, **LYNSEY ADDARIO**, whose images in *The New York Times*, *National Geographic* and TIME magazine over the past two decades have changed the way we see the world. We will hear about how photojournalists really work, what they see, how they know when and what to shoot, and many other questions that bring us deeper into her craft. She will discuss, too, her own personal pantheon of photojournalist heroes whose work has been instrumental to her own.
- I'm Not Making This Up: I'm 70
Pulitzer Prize-winning humor writer **DAVE BARRY** will talk about his latest book, *BEST. STATE. EVER.: A FLORIDA MAN DEFENDS HIS HOMELAND*, in which he explains why Florida is the way it is, and why it probably should not be expelled from the union. He will also discuss getting old, which he is in the process of doing, as well as other pertinent topics, assuming he can remember what they are.
- Can We Solve the Global Water Crisis?
(*Second chance to hear this session*)
We are facing a dramatic shortage of the very thing that makes all life possible: water. Nearly four billion people—about 66 percent of the world's population—live without sufficient access to fresh water for at least one month of the year. **JAY FAMIGLIETTI**, a professor at the University of California at Irvine and senior water scientist at the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, will talk us through this environmental crisis and tell us what, if anything, can be done about it.

SUNDAY, JULY 2 *continued*

Breakout
Sessions
(*continued*)

- [Longmire, or How Many People Can You Kill in a Town of 25?](#)
CRAIG JOHNSON's *New York Times* best-selling Walt Longmire novels form the basis for the hit TV drama series *Longmire*. Johnson will talk about the ways his life has, and has not, changed from the days when he was just a northern Wyoming rancher in a town of 25.
- [Birds of Prey and Us](#)
What is it about birds of prey that stirs the human soul? Hawks, eagles, and falcons have held special meaning for us for millennia; they've been viewed as gods, hunting partners, diplomatic counters, vermin, conservation icons, and even weapons of war. In a talk rich with anecdote and humor, based on years of historical research, fieldwork, and the practice of falconry, author **HELEN MACDONALD** reflects on the nature of birds of prey, and what their rich and surprising history can tell us about our problematic relationship to the natural world.
- [Questions of Living and Dying](#)
BJ MILLER has emerged as one of the country's leading authorities on humane and emotionally attuned end-of-life care, and **KATHY HULL** founded the first freestanding pediatric palliative care center in the U.S. In this intimate Q & A session, they will use the audience's own questions as their guide in discussing how our manner of dying can inform the meaning we are able to take, finally, from the lives we have lived.
- [Amazon and the Book Business](#)
Remember when Amazon was a newcomer on the business and cultural landscape and its main business was selling books? Remember when the Kindle seemed like a newfangled gizmo that nobody needed or wanted? In his award-winning book *THE EVERYTHING STORE: JEFF BEZOS AND THE AGE OF AMAZON* author **BRAD STONE** gave readers the first in-depth, fly-on-the-wall account of life at Amazon. Join him for a discussion of Amazon's current influence on publishing companies and readers alike, and what he makes of Bezos' recent moves, including his 2013 purchase of *The Washington Post*.

SUNDAY, JULY 2 *continued*

9:00 – 10:00 AM

Breakout
Sessions
(*continued*)

- Nixon: A Man Divided

In his most recent book, *BEING NIXON*, author **EVAN THOMAS** gives us a portrait of one of the most compelling, driven, and flawed men ever to occupy the White House, a man who, like the current president, thrived on conflict. He is, in Thomas's telling, a Shakespearean character, so hungry and so gifted in so many ways, and yet ultimately so doomed by his own lack of self-awareness. Thomas, the author of nine books, says the example of Nixon is more relevant than ever. He will tell us why that is true and why the 37th president continues to haunt the national imagination.

- How (and How Not) To Write: Notes on Becoming a Writer

Join National Book Award-winning author **COLSON WHITEHEAD** as he leads us down the less-than-straight path into a life of literary creation. As Whitehead will explain, for every rule on the craft of writing (and this brilliant novelist has a bunch of them), there is usually a funny story or two to go with it, and often the stories turn out to be truer and more illuminating than the rules.

10:30 – 11:30 AM

Pavilion

Two Novelists, Many Opinions and Some Laughs

Join two of today's most talented and engaging novelists, **LAUREN GROFF** and **MARIA SEMPLE**, for a wide-ranging, free-wheeling, anything-goes conversation between good literary chums. They will discuss their writing lives, the pushes and pulls of success, and how they nurture their narratives and bring their characters to life. As we can see in their most recent books—Groff's *FATES AND FURIES* and Semple's *TODAY WILL BE DIFFERENT*—these very different writers share a love of the complex and absurd in human behavior.

SUNDAY, JULY 2 *continued*

12:00 – 1:00 PM

Pavilion

FAR AND AWAY: How Traveling to 87 Countries Made Me Who I Am

At a time when the value of internationalism, along with its ethic of the common good, has been forcefully thrown into question, National Book Award-winning author **ANDREW SOLOMON** believes that learning about cultures other than our own is more essential than ever as a “necessary remedy to our perilously frightening times.” For the past twenty-five years, Solomon has been traveling to far-off places, many of them in the midst of seismic political, cultural and spiritual shifts. The literary result, as novelist Salman Rushdie has said, is much more than travel writing; it is “a portrait of our world.” Travels to countries like Myanmar, Afghanistan and South Africa have opened Solomon’s eyes and burnished his compassion and his courage. Join him as he takes us far and away, introducing us to the friends he has made along the way and reminding us that we are citizens not just of nations, but of the world.

1:00 – 2:30 PM

Lunch

Lower Green

2:30 – 3:30 PM

Breakout Sessions (*locations listed on the back of your conference pass*)

- Liberty Imperiled

In 2012, public alarm sounded when *The Guardian* revealed that the National Security Agency had been collecting data about Americans’ communications in the United States and overseas. Congress responded by prohibiting certain kinds of collection and requiring the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC) to appoint five *amici curiae* (friends of the court) to represent constitutional rights when novel questions of law arise. In her recent award-winning book, **LAURA K. DONOHUE**, Professor of Law at Georgetown and one of the five public advocates to FISC, argues that the approach to surveillance taken by the government amounts to a revival of the general warrant, which is precisely what the Founders tried to prohibit by enacting the Fourth Amendment. As new technologies emerge and federal power expands, at stake is the future of privacy in the United States. The program will include a demonstration of drone and IT technology. No attendee’s privacy will be invaded.

SUNDAY, JULY 2 *continued*

2:30 – 3:30 PM

Breakout
Sessions
(*continued*)

- Our Divided Land

It is probably fair to say that the United States of America has never seemed less united, certainly in recent memory. How did it become this way? What are the political, economic, racial and psychological factors at the heart of the divide? We have asked two of our most respected cultural commentators, sociology professor **ARLIE RUSSELL HOCHSCHILD** and *New York Times* columnist **DAVID BROOKS**, to explore these questions in a wide-ranging conversation. Hochschild is the author of the much-discussed recent book, *STRANGERS IN THEIR OWN LAND: ANGER AND MOURNING ON THE AMERICAN RIGHT*, in which she profiles voters in deepest Louisiana, a stronghold of the conservative right. Like Hochschild, Brooks has increasingly become an investigator of the human heart and of what motivates all Americans, whatever their political affiliations, at the deepest level.

- THE CITIZEN-SOLDIER: MORAL RISK AND THE MODERN MILITARY

We live in a country where a tiny minority of our citizens fight our wars. These soldiers hold up a moral mirror to the rest of us; how we treat them upon their return speaks to our national character as deeply as anything we must confront. This is terrain that writer **PHIL KLAY** knows intimately. A U.S. Marine Corps veteran and winner of the 2014 National Book Award for his fiction debut, *REDEPLOYMENT*, Klay will talk to us about his experiences and those of others who do America's bidding on the world's battlefields, this at a time when the war in Afghanistan—now the longest in American history—grinds on.

- Stalin's Last American Spy

At a time when Russia is known to have attempted manipulation of the recent U.S. Presidential elections, **KATI MARTON** will tell us a remarkable true story of past intervention by Moscow at the highest reaches of Washington politics. Marton will unravel the mysterious life of Noel Field, the man at the center of her latest book, *TRUE BELIEVER*, an Ivy League-educated State Department official who, however deeply rooted in the culture and history of the United States, spied for Joseph Stalin. While the book is set largely from the 1920s to the 1970s, this story of the power of fanaticism and demagoguery and its profound effects on American life could not be more relevant than it is today.

SUNDAY, JULY 2 *continued*

4:00 – 5:00 PM

*Pavilion
and
Lawn*

Muslims in America: A Playwright's Compendium of Characters

No playwright has challenged our perceptions of Muslims in America as boldly, and with such dramatic vigor, as has **AYAD AKHTAR**, who won the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for Drama for *DISGRACED*, the most produced play of the 2015-2016 season. Join Akhtar for an exciting evening of theater as characters from three of his recent plays grapple with themselves and with each other, and with the very idea of character. In this hour, Akhtar will stage monologues from his plays *DISGRACED* and *THE INVISIBLE HAND*, followed by a scene from *THE WHO & THE WHAT*, all framed by the playwright's narration and reflections on his craft and themes. He will be joined on stage by two actors steeped in his work, **RAJESH BOSE** and **NADINE MALOUF**.

5:30 – 6:30 PM

Pavilion

The Soul of America

Over the past few years, as partisan, political wars have been raging, *New York Times* columnist **DAVID BROOKS** has been mining a different vein. He has been traveling around the country, talking to Americans about something beyond and deeper than politics, trying to find out what matters to them and taking the measure of their longings and loyalties and loneliness. He says people are looking for connections with each other, with their families and their communities, and trying to figure out how to live fulfilled and meaningful lives of moral worth. These are the themes he explored in his two most recent books, *THE ROAD TO CHARACTER* and *THE SOCIAL ANIMAL*, and that he will explore with us tonight.

MONDAY, JULY 3

8:00 – 9:00 AM Continental Breakfast
Lodge Terrace

9:00 – 10:00 AM Breakout Sessions (*locations listed on the back of your conference pass*)

- JUNK: THE GOLDEN AGE OF DEBT
It's 1985. Robert Merkin, the resident genius of the upstart investment firm Sacker Lowell has just landed on the cover of TIME magazine. Hailed as "America's Alchemist," his proclamation that "debt is an asset" has propelled him to dizzying heights. Zealously promoting his belief in the near-sacred infallibility of markets, he is trying to reshape the world. What Merkin sets in motion is nothing less than a financial civil war, pitting magnates against workers, lawyers against journalists, and ultimately, pitting everyone against themselves. **AYAD AKHTAR's** new play, opening on Broadway this fall, takes us back to the hotbed of the '80s and offers us an origin story for the world and a tale of how, while most of us weren't watching, money became the only thing of real value. He will take us behind the scenes not only of an era, but of his creative process as well.
- How British Food Went from Worst to Best
After centuries of bearing its reputation for notoriously dreadful food, London has undergone a complete culinary transformation and is now widely considered to be one of the most vibrant restaurant cities in the world. Award-winning food writer **ALEKSANDRA CRAPANZANO**, author of the recently published *THE LONDON COOKBOOK*, will look at the who, why, where and how behind this sea change, while also profiling some of the chefs who have spearheaded this tasty revolution. Much great food will be discussed. So too will Los Angeles, where Crapanzano sees a parallel food renaissance emerging.
- Writing and the Moon
Join award-winning novelist **LAUREN GROFF** on a luminous literary tour of the moon as it figures in some of our most beloved artistic works, from the plays of William Shakespeare to the fables of Italo Calvino and beyond. Through history, the moon has tugged at many a writer's imagination, serving not just as subject, but as muse. Groff will tell us why that is and how the moon has exerted its pull on her.

MONDAY, JULY 3 *continued*

Breakout
Sessions
(*continued*)

- How to Write History
How do historians do their work? How do they find their stories, their source material? Journalist and historian **ADAM HOCHSCHILD**, award-winning author of eight books, including most recently, *SPAIN IN OUR HEARTS: AMERICANS IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR, 1936-1939*, will talk about the process of writing history. Where does he start? How does he do his research? How does he find his way in, identify the characters to focus on, and keep their stories vivid and alive, and still truthful? Come learn about the historian's craft.
- War and Fiction
From *THE ILIAD* onward, some of the best and most influential novels, stories and poems have been those about war, almost all written by writers who were themselves military veterans. Join National Book Award-winning fiction writer and Marine Corps veteran **PHIL KLAY** for an insider's discussion of the works he considers central to his personal literary canon, how they have influenced him, and why he believes they continue to resonate so powerfully with readers today.
- Big Money in American Politics
New Yorker staff writer **JANE MAYER** spent five years writing the book *DARK MONEY*, her investigation into Charles and David Koch and a handful of allied billionaires, who have reshaped U.S. politics through the decades-long construction of what Mayer calls an "integrated political network" fueled by donations from hundreds of wealthy conservatives. In what is certain to be a lively and fascinating question-and-answer session with SVWC Board member and Pulitzer Prize-winning author **LIAQUAT AHAMED**, Mayer will talk about her journalistic methods—the public records, newly unearthed documents, and hundreds of interviews she relied on in reporting her story—and what she believes her conclusions reveal about and mean for the American political system.
- The Royals (*Second chance to hear this session*)
If you loved *THE CROWN*, you will want to hear author **SALLY BEDELL SMITH** share the real stories of the British royal family in all its quirks and complexities. Author of the new book, *PRINCE CHARLES: THE PASSIONS AND PARADOXES OF AN IMPROBABLE LIFE*, and of an earlier volume on his mother, *ELIZABETH THE QUEEN*, Smith's work aims to humanize the often misperceived duo. She will tell us about the strange, privileged lives of the Queen and the Prince, about the ties that bind them, but also about their striking differences.

MONDAY, JULY 3 *continued*

9:00 – 10:00 AM

Breakout
Sessions
(*continued*)

• Like Father, Like Daughter

Where does the desire to be a writer come from? **EVAN THOMAS** and **LOUISA THOMAS** are father and daughter authors, both well-regarded journalists and biographers. He was a longtime reporter and editor for *TIME* and *Newsweek* and has written nine books, including biographies of Dwight Eisenhower and Robert Kennedy. His daughter is also a widely published journalist and biographer with two books to her name, including her most recent about Louisa Adams. How did Louisa Thomas's father pass on to her his love of words? How do they talk about their works in progress? And what have they learned from each other along the way?

10:30 – 11:30 AM

Pavilion

THE RAIN IN PORTUGAL: POEMS

Lauded by *The Wall Street Journal* as “America’s favorite poet,” **BILLY COLLINS** is the first poet since Robert Frost who has managed to combine high critical acclaim with broad popular appeal. As you will discover in this reading of work from his latest book, *THE RAIN IN PORTUGAL*, he writes conversational, witty poems that welcome readers with humor but often slip into quirky or tender observations on the everyday, on reading and writing, and on poetry itself. Collins sees his poetry as “a form of travel writing” and considers humor “a door into the serious.” Join him as he steps through that magic door, and back again, in an hour-long poetic journey that promises to be as humorous as it is profound.

12:00 – 1:00 PM

Pavilion

What Really Matters at the End of Life

The 2017 Sun Valley Writers’ Conference concludes with a discussion between two of America’s most empathic physicians, both of whom are ardently engaged with questions about the relationship between how we live and how we die. What is a good death? How do we judge? At the end of our lives, what do we most wish for? What truly matters? **BJ MILLER** is a renowned hospice and palliative medicine physician whose own near-death experience and personal journey has deeply informed his thinking about how to create a dignified, graceful end of life for his patients. Miller will be in conversation with **ABRAHAM VERGHESE**, distinguished writer and professor in the Department of Medicine, Stanford University.

1:00 PM

Lodge Terrace

Farewell lunch for full conference pass holders and guest writers.