

**FOR RELEASE**

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**SECOND ANNUAL WHY READING MATTERS CONFERENCE BRINGS TOGETHER DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES TO EXPLORE HOW WE CAN BUILD NEW AUDIENCES FOR BOOKS**

*Keynote by Emma Straub, author and owner of Books Are Magic*

*Author appearance by Jason Reynolds*

*Celebration of Barbershop Books, winner of the 2017 Innovations in Reading Prize*

The National Book Foundation's second annual Why Reading Matters conference returns on June 15 for a full day of presentations focused on building a new audience for books.

The conference is designed to bring together educators, non-profit administrators, librarians, academics, publishing professionals, writers, and literary activists of all kinds to discover and share ways to welcome more readers into their communities.

"The National Book Foundation works every day to make sure that reading matters," says Lisa Lucas, Executive Director of the National Book Foundation. "Our annual conference is an amazing opportunity to celebrate and learn from the inspiring and innovative work that so many individuals and organizations are doing to reach and support readers."

The conference will feature a keynote presentation by Emma Straub, author and founder of Books Are Magic; a celebration of the 2017 Innovations in Reading prize winner Barbershop Books; a special appearance by National Book Award Finalist Jason Reynolds; and a variety of breakout sessions focused on how we can foster and increase inclusivity among new readers. Session highlights include:

- The Harry Potter Alliance discussing how fan culture can be leveraged for activism;
- Noëlle Santos, sharing the crowd-funding techniques that led to her raising \$150K to open what will be the only bookstore in the Bronx;
- Drag Queen Story Hour at the Brooklyn Public Library, a unique approach to story time focused on fostering inclusivity and acceptance;

- Street Books, a Portland, OR-based initiative that sends librarians on bikes to reach people living on the streets;
- Alvin Irby, founder of Barbershop Books, which creates child-friendly reading spaces in barbershops in black communities and encourages positive out-of-school time reading for young black boys.

The conference will be held from 9 AM – 3 PM on Thursday, June 15 at the Frank Sinatra School of the Arts in Long Island City, NY. Registration is open to the public; tickets are \$35 and can be purchased at [nationalbook.org](http://nationalbook.org)

The 2017 Why Reading Matters conference is supported by the Levenger Foundation, and the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development.

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**The National Book Foundation's** mission is to celebrate the best of American literature, to expand its audience, and to enhance the cultural value of good writing in America. In addition to the National Book Awards, for which it is best known, the Foundation's programs include **5 Under 35**, a celebration of emerging fiction writers selected by former National Book Award Finalists and Winners; the **National Book Awards Teen Press Conference**, an opportunity for students to interview the current National Book Award Finalists in Young People's Literature; **NBA on Campus**, a partnership that brings current National Book Award authors to colleges around the country; the **Innovations in Reading Prize**, awarded to individuals and institutions that have developed innovative means of creating and sustaining a lifelong love of reading; and **BookUp**, a writer-led, after-school reading club for middle and high-school students.