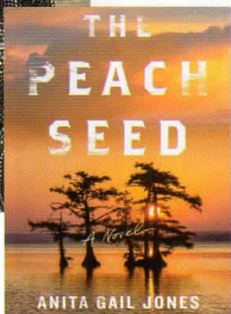


# Author Talk BY NICK PAULEY



We talked with Bay Area-based writer Anita Gail Jones about her debut novel, *The Peach Seed*, a sweeping multi-generational family drama. Set mostly in the small Georgia town where Jones grew up, the novel explores themes of inheritance, tradition, the weight of history and the unbreakable bonds of family. Jones, a visual artist as well as a writer, shares some of her creative process, and talks about the impetus for writing her highly anticipated first novel.

**What was the original genesis of *The Peach Seed*? When did you start thinking about, and start writing, the novel?** This project began with a question for my father, Mr. Silas Jones, who had passed away, so I was on my own for the answer. He was born in 1921 in southwest Georgia, a place where Black men of The Greatest Generation lived in what James Baldwin called “the teeth of the Southern terror” — and yet — they were leaders in their families, churches and communities when the domineering culture and the U.S.

government through actual laws and policies considered them less than human. I wanted to know how they did this, and turned to fiction for an answer.

**How does your work as a visual artist impact your writing?** There is constant, relentless cross-pollination happening. For years

I walked the same route in my neighborhood making notes in a small notebook, then moving on to dictating into my iPhone. Early on during those walks, I nurtured plans to expand *The Peach Seed* story across three mediums: novel, play and screenplay, and the cross-pollination began — and continues! My visual artist and my writer are in perpetual conversation.

**Is there anything that you want local readers, especially, to know about your novel?** So many friends here in California have never been to the South, and they have some pretty hefty, misguided notions about what it’s like. And, of course, political barbarity does not help one bit. I’m hoping *The Peach Seed* can be a window and a door for readers everywhere to show the region and the uplifting parts of its rich history some respect by seeing it again.



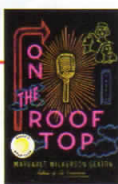
***The Peach Seed* by Anita Gail Jones (Bay Area), Henry Holt, \$29.99** *The Peach Seed* begins

with a surprise encounter: aging widower Fletcher Dukes recognizes Altovise Benson, the long-lost love of his youth, in a small-town Georgia grocery store. Through elegant storytelling, the reader learns of the courtship and separation during the civil rights movement, and how those events shaped the lives of the contemporary Dukes family. Containing multiple timelines (including chapters set during the slave trade of the 19th century), the book is also an intimate chronicle of family bonds and second chances. *Appearing at Book Passage Corte Madera, August 5, 3 p.m.*



***The Asking: New and Selected Poems* by Jane Hirshfield (Mill Valley), Alfred A. Knopf, \$35** Award-winning poet Jane Hirshfield’s new collection

contains work drawing from nine previous books, along with over 30 new poems celebrating the natural world, the varieties of human connection, and the mysteries of perception. A career highlight from one of America’s finest living poets. *Appearing at Book Passage Corte Madera, September 12, 6 p.m.*



***On the Rooftop* by Margaret Wilkerson Sexton (Oakland), Ecco Books, \$18.99** This riveting novel follows

three sisters who make up The Salvations, a girl group in 1950s San Francisco. As they enter adulthood, their diverging paths and conflicts with their overbearing mother threaten their harmony, just as gentrification begins to transform their Fillmore neighborhood. A poignant story of a family and a city on the brink of profound change. *Appearing at the Mill Valley Public Library, September 14, 6:30 p.m.*

*In Partnership with Book Passage — reviews by Marketing Manager Nick Pauley*