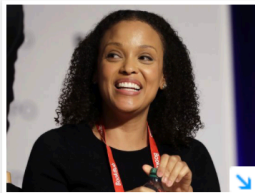


Jesmyn Ward returns to Mississippi Book Festival

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best selling author John Grisham returned to the Mississippi Captiol grounds for the first time since he served in the Legislature for the innagural Mississippi Book Festival. (Video by Jacob Threadgill / The Clarion-Ledger)



(Photo: Mark Lennihan, AP)

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Two-time National Book Award winner and Mississippi native Jesmyn Ward will return for the 2018 Mississippi Book Festival.

In November 2017, Ward became the first woman and black author to claim two National Book Awards for Fiction, when her third novel, 2017's "[Sing, Unburied, Sing](#)" followed her second book, 2011's "[Salvage the Bones](#)" in winning the honor.

Ward, who grew up in DeLisle, Miss., attended the Mississippi Book Festival in 2016.

On Feb. 7, it was announced that Ward has her next two novels planned. [Scribner](#) told The Associated Press that Ward will write an adult novel about an enslaved woman sent from the Carolinas to New Orleans. She will then work on her first novel for middle graders, a "magical adventure" featuring a Southern black woman with "special powers."

"Even though I read voraciously as a child, I never saw myself in books," Ward said in a statement. "Without narratives to expand my ideas of who I could be, I accepted the stories others told me about myself, stories which diminished and belittled me and people like me. I want to write against that. I've wanted to write a middle grade/YA book for years, a book that might reach the child I once was and expand that child's sense of self."

Titles and publication dates for the two books have not yet been determined. Scribner will publish the adult book, while the middle grade novel will be released by another Simon & Schuster imprint, Caitlyn Dlouhy Books, part of Simon & Schuster's Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

Other books by Ward include the novel "Where the Line Bleeds" in 2008 and the memoir "Men We Reaped" in 2013.