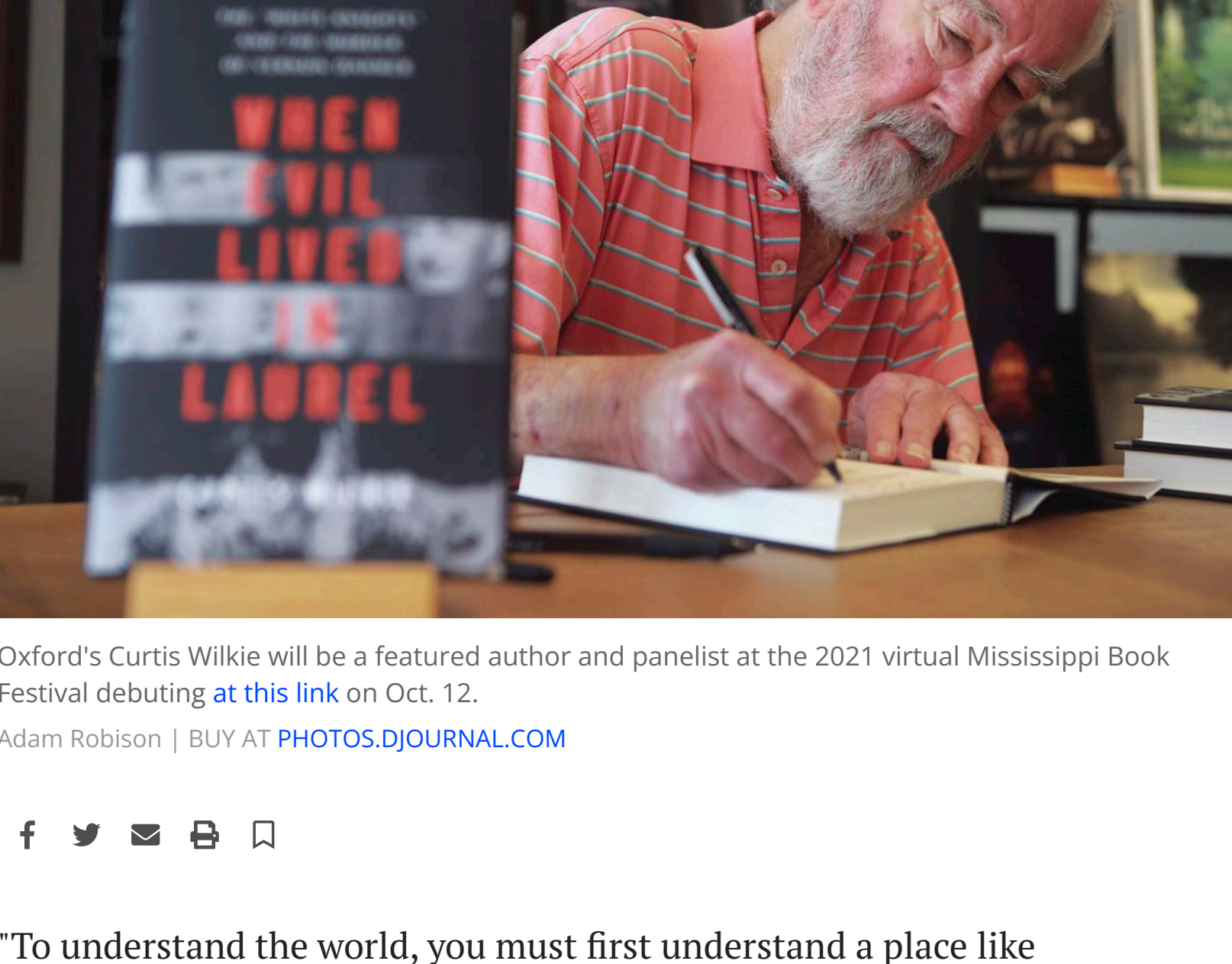


Mississippi Book Festival going virtual again

By BROOKE BURLESON Daily Journal Oct 8, 2021 Comments



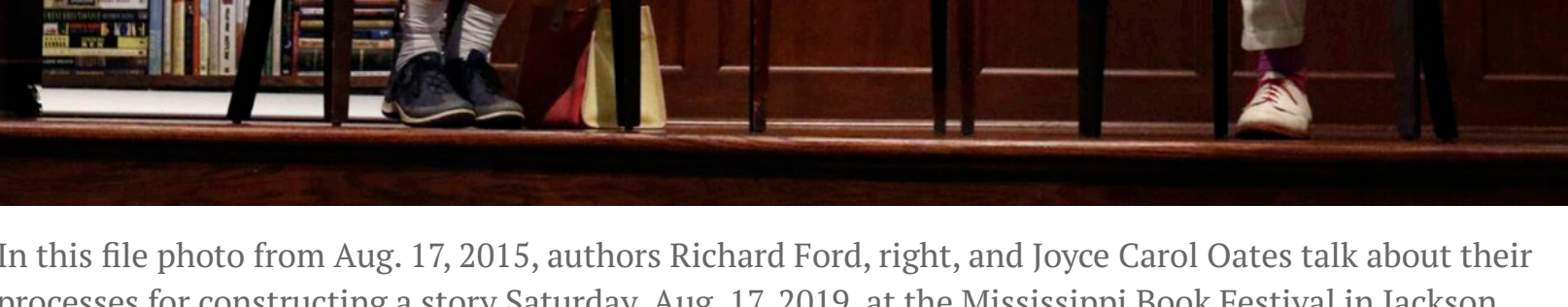
Oxford's Curtis Wilkie will be a featured author and panelist at the 2021 virtual Mississippi Book Festival debuting [at this link](#) on Oct. 12.

Adam Robison | BUY AT [PHOTOS.DJOURNAL.COM](#)

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"To understand the world, you must first understand a place like Mississippi."

This famous William Faulkner quote sums up the essence of the Mississippi Book Festival, which is returning to a virtual format on Oct. 12.

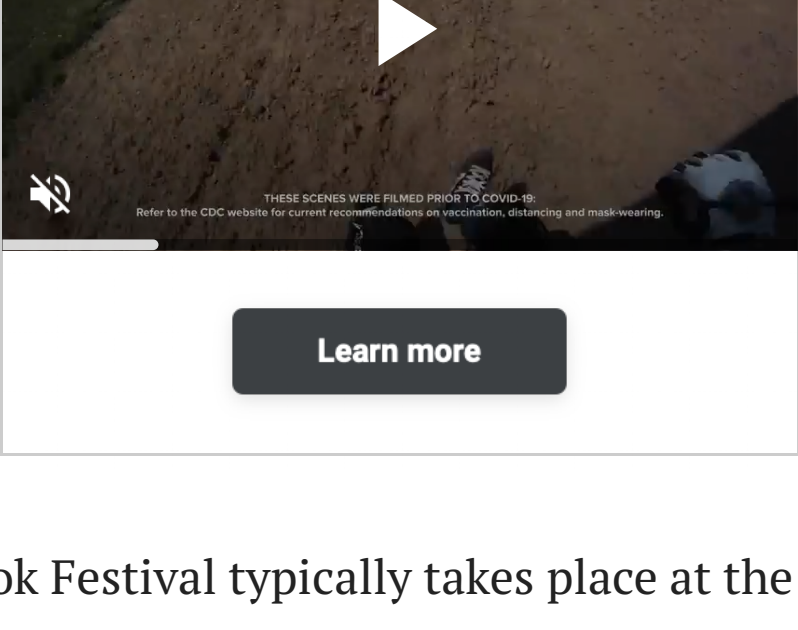


In this file photo from Aug. 17, 2015, authors Richard Ford, right, and Joyce Carol Oates talk about their processes for constructing a story Saturday, Aug. 17, 2019, at the Mississippi Book Festival in Jackson, Miss. This year's festival, originally set for Aug. 21, will be virtual because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 was also virtual.

Rogelio V. Solis | AP

"Mississippi has such a rich literary history. Some of the greatest writers in the English language were born and raised in Mississippi. The book festival wanted to honor that tradition. Fans get to come meet their favorite author and sit in on wonderful panels," said Ellen Rodgers Daniels, executive director of the festival.

For seven years, the Mississippi Book Festival has given a well-deserved spotlight to emergent and seasoned authors alike. "The Mississippi Book Festival came to be in 2015 when a couple of book advocates put their heads together and developed the festival for Mississippi." Daniels' goal, and the reason for the festival's existence, is to share the impressive repertoire of Mississippi authors and the [literary impact](#) they have had worldwide.



The Mississippi Book Festival typically takes place at the Mississippi State Capitol complex and lawn, but after having to cancel the [2020 event](#) due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the festival quickly adapted to provide hopeful attendees with an online experience. Although this year's festival was scheduled to take place in August, the resurgence of COVID-19 cases in the late summer prompted its seventh installment to once again debut virtually.



In this file photo from 2017, Gov. Phil Bryant and Librarian of Congress Dr. Carla Hayden open the 2017 Mississippi Book Festival in the State Capitol, Aug. 19.

Larrison Campbell | Mississippi Today

The festival will include [31 recorded panels](#) with 110 authors and moderators. Viewers will be able to experience what was intended to take place in-person with fiction panels, non-fiction panels, and one-on-one conversations as focal points. Representatives from The University Press of Mississippi will be panelists as well as Pulitzer Prize winner Kai Bird, who will be talking about his new book *The Outlier: The Unfinished Presidency of Jimmy Carter*. Kai will be in conversation with Katie Blount, executive director of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

Other authors taking part in the festival are Angie Thomas, Jerry Mitchell, and [Curtis Wilkie](#). Wilkie's new book, *When Evil Lived in Laurel: The 'White Knights' and the Murder of Vernon Dahmer*, tells the story of the killing of Civil Rights Movement leader, Vernon Dahmer, and the civilian FBI informant, Tom Landrum, who infiltrated the Ku Klux Klan. Landrum was dedicated to helping serve justice for Dahmer's murder. Tom Landrum's son, Mike Landrum, wife, Anne Landrum, and Jones county's prosecutor at the time of the trial, Judge Charles Pickering, will all be featured panelists.



In this file photo from July 29, 2021, Oxford author Curtis Wilkie, signs copies of his new book, "When Evil Lived in Laurel", on Wednesday afternoon at Reed's GumTree Bookstore in Downtown Tupelo.

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When asked why the Mississippi Book Festival is important to Mississippi, Daniels said, "We have such a rich literary history and presence. As I heard someone say in a virtual panel that will go live Tuesday, Mississippi storytelling is like competitive sports here in the south. We hold that very dear to us. It's a wonderful event that shines a light on Mississippi."

Daniels also emphasized how valuable the festival is for children. "Nothing will warm your heart more than seeing a room full of children get excited about meeting their favorite author. Nothing speaks more to the book festival's goal than that."

Every year, the Mississippi Book Festival hosts their kid-centric event, KidNote, which is usually held the Friday before the main festivities commence. KidNote still happened this year but premiered virtually ahead of time. KidNote's spotlight guest was young adult author Nic Stone, who recently released her newest middle grade book, *Clean Getaway*. This year, KidNote reached 9,300 fourth through eighth grade children around the state.

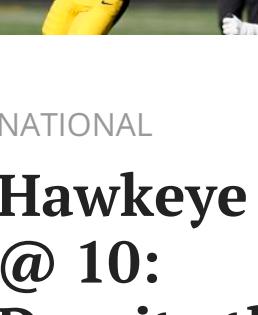
This year's virtual festival is free to the public and will launch Tuesday, Oct. 12 at 10 a.m. on [Mississippi Book Festival's website](#). All panels recorded since the festival's inception are available at the aforementioned link. The 2022 Mississippi Book Festival is expected to be in-person on Aug. 20.

BROOKE BURLESON is a digital producer for the Daily Journal. Contact her at brooke.burleson@djjournal.com.

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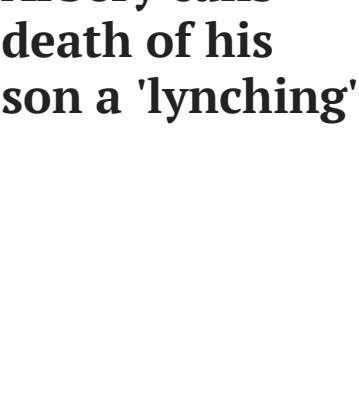
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