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**Angie Thomas and Alyssa Cole keynote the virtual Orlando Book Festival on April 3**

ORLANDO, Fla. (March 19, 2021) –The Orlando Book Festival returns on Saturday April 3 in virtual format with a list of best-selling authors, including Angie Thomas (*The Hate U Give*) and Alyssa Cole (*An Extraordinary Union*) as featured speakers.

Angie Thomas kicks off the festival as the opening keynote speaker where she will be joined for a live chat by Ayana Gray, author of the upcoming title *Beast of Prey*. Thomas is the author of the critically acclaimed debut novel and *New York Times* bestselling *The Hate U Give*, which has spent more than four years on the bestselling list. *The Hate U Give* was also made into a film in 2018. Her second novel, *On the Come Up*, is also a *NYT* bestseller with a film in development in the near future.

“It’s important to continue telling authentic stories where readers can see themselves and their communities accurately reflected,” commented Thomas on her book being one of the most-challenged books of the last few years by the American Library Association. “I want them to see how amazing

and wonderful and beautiful they are as they are, when the world tries to tell them they're either too much or not enough."

The Orlando Book Festival is a day-long celebration of books which also features book discussions, workshops and presentations from bestselling authors from all around the country. This year's featured authors and panels include:

- 10 a.m. – Angie Thomas in conversation with Ayana Gray
- 11 a.m. – Say YAY to YA! featuring Taylor Simonds, Amber Mitchell and Namina Forna  
Some of the best books being published right now are in the Young Adult category. Join us for a discussion of what makes YA awesome for readers of all ages.
- 12 p.m. – Crafting Tension featuring Sefani Deoul, James Holmes, Michael Wiley and Isabel Ibañez  
Tension is the secret to both hooking and holding the reader. These authors will show you how to keep readers turning the pages.
- 1 p.m. – The Truth in Fiction featuring Jenny Torres Sanchez, Trish Doller, Caitlin Lochner  
Fiction can help us face uncomfortable feelings and deal with hard truths. These authors will discuss how fictional stories can shine a light on the world all around us.
- 2 p.m. – How to Keep Young Readers Engaged featuring RM Romero, Rob Sanders and Kelly Coon  
To captivate young readers, writers must balance a youthful imagination with an adult professionalism. Learn how to write stories that entrance young minds.
- 3 p.m. – Romancing the Book featuring Brenda Jackson, Mara Wells and Racquel Henry  
Romance is the best-selling literary genre in the world. Come chat with the authors that make readers swoon.
- 4 p.m. – Closing keynote Alyssa Cole

Closing up the festival is *New York Times* and *USA Today* best-selling author Alyssa Cole. Best known for her Civil War-set romance *An Extraordinary Union*, which won the American Library Association's (ALA) RUSA Best Romance for 2018, she has had numerous books in the romance, thriller and historical genres receive critical acclaim from a number of outlets like Library Journal, Entertainment Weekly, BuzzFeed and many more.

The Orlando Book Festival takes place on Saturday, April 3 from 10 – 5 p.m. This event is free to the public, but registration is recommended. For more information about this year's featured authors, visit [ocls.info/obf](https://ocls.info/obf).

## **LEARN. GROW. CONNECT.**

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For FY2020-21 37.2% of the total cost for OCLS equipment, accessories, and services for virtual programs, events, and classes, as well as PPE and STEM Learning Kits (\$64,689), is supported by federal money; 62.8% of this project (\$109,311) is supported by local money. The total budget for this project is \$174,000.

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