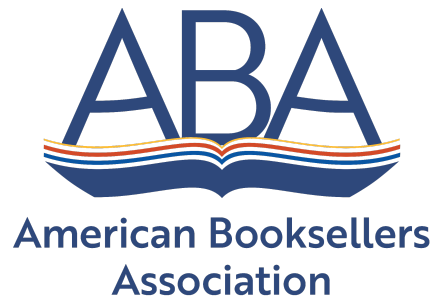




PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Harrison, NY — July 8, 2026

Hanif Abdurraqib Named Indie Bookstore Ambassador

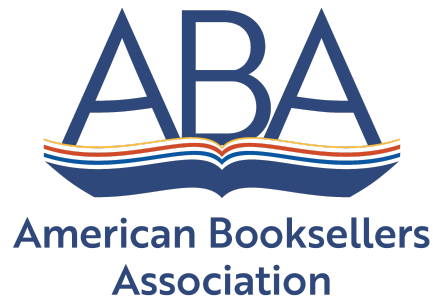
Abdurraqib to celebrate independent bookstores through year-round advocacy and key campaigns.



The American Booksellers Association (ABA) is thrilled to announce Hanif Abdurraqib as our Indie Bookstore Ambassador for 2026. ABA launched the **Indie Bookstore Ambassador program** in 2022 to highlight independent bookstores year-round. From [Indies First](#) (Small Business Saturday, November 28) to [Independent Bookstore Day](#) (April 24, 2027), the Indie Bookstore Ambassador serves as a champion for independent bookstores. Previous ambassadors include Celeste Ng (2022), Amanda Gorman (2023), Trevor Noah (2024), and LeVar Burton (2025).

At a time when access to books and meaningful literary engagement feel more important than ever, the Indie Bookstore Ambassador ignites indie booksellers around a shared purpose: fostering future generations of readers while championing the freedom to read, both central to indies and ABA's mission.





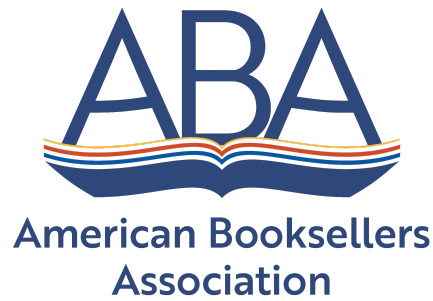
Hanif Abdurraqib is a poet, essayist, and cultural critic from Columbus, Ohio. He is a recipient of the MacArthur Foundation “Genius Grant” and the author of *There's Always This Year*, a *New York Times* bestseller and winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award; *A Little Devil in America*, winner of the Carnegie Medal and a National Book Award finalist; *The Crown Ain't Worth Much*; *They Can't Kill Us Until They Kill Us*; *Go Ahead in the Rain*; and *A Fortune for Your Disaster*, winner of the Lenore Marshall Poetry Prize. He is a graduate of Beechcroft High School.

In accepting the invitation to be the ambassador, Abdurraqib shared, “When I am traveling, the places I often go to first are the independent bookstores in a city, because independent booksellers often have a unique understanding of the place they are in and the responsibility they have to the people in the place, which means they can make a unique map of a city and the interests of people in it.” He continues, “I am honored to serve in this role because I believe indie booksellers are masters of close attention, and the benefit of that close attention is the ability to place something in someone's hand that can be transportive, and life-altering.”

Senior Marketing Manager, Courtney Wallace, shares, “Like the best independent bookstores, Mr. Abdurraqib's work reminds us that literature isn't a luxury — it's a lifeline. Whether through poetry, criticism, or cultural commentary, he fosters the kind of thoughtful, empathetic, and deeply human conversations that indie bookstores create every day. As he prepares to publish a new poetry collection in 2027, we're honored to welcome Abdurraqib as an ambassador who celebrates the power of books, the importance of literary culture, and the essential role independent bookstores play in bringing communities together.”

The first major independent bookstore event coming up for Abdurraqib as the Ambassador is **Indies First**. On Small Business Saturday (November 28) — a day dedicated to supporting the local businesses that help create jobs, boost the economy, and preserve neighborhoods — independent bookstores will host authors as honorary booksellers to celebrate Indies First, where they will help handsell their favorite titles, sign books, give readings, and more.





Indies First was created in 2013; other authors and celebrities who have spearheaded the campaign include Roxane Gay, Jason Reynolds, Dan Rather, Kate DiCamillo, Cheryl Strayed, and Lena Dunham. Fans can follow Indies First through IndieBound on [Facebook](#) and American Booksellers Association on [Instagram](#), as well as the hashtag #IndiesFirst, and search for their local bookstores on [IndieBound.org](#).

Inquiries about Indies First can be directed to indiesfirst@bookweb.org.

About the American Booksellers Association (www.BookWeb.org)

The American Booksellers Association is a national trade association that supports and advocates for the success of independent bookstores. We provide members with education, networking opportunities, advocacy, resources, and technology. In turn our members support local schools through book fairs, donations and author visits; promote literacy; provide inclusive community centers; connect readers and books; add character to neighborhoods; champion and center diverse and new voices; and contribute to the local economy. We feel honored to support over 3,700 independent bookstores in their work.

