

# ‘The Color Purple’ author Alice Walker coming to Sebastiani Theatre

On June 3, Alice Walker heads to Sonoma for a screening event with documentarian Pratibha Parmar that offers films focused on race, feminism and identity.



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Alice Walker, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning book “The Color Purple,” will visit Sonoma for a special screening event on June 3. (AP Photo/Tara Todras-Whitehill)

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INDEX-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

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As the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of “The Color Purple,” Alice Walker is no stranger to stories that challenge audiences with the truth. Next week, she’ll come to Sonoma for a screening event with documentarian Pratibha Parmar that offers films focused on race, feminism and identity.

"There's not a lot of truth in the mainstream media," Walker said. "We know that there is a reality, that's not just being overlooked — it's being hidden."

Set for Saturday, June 3, and hosted by the Sonoma International Film Festival and Musea Center at the Sebastiani Theatre, the highlight will be a private reception with Walker and Parmar, along with three of the filmmaker's documentaries. That includes "Alice Walker: Beauty In Truth," a bio-picture about the author that features interviews with Steven Spielberg, Danny Glover and Quincy Jones.

Parmar has directed award-winning films for BBC and PBS. Though she is currently busy working on scripted television, including recent episodes of "Queen Sugar" and "Law & Order: SVU," this event showcases her work as a documentarian.

Her film "Warrior Marks" features interviews from Senegal, Gambia, Burkina Faso, the United States and England that explore the cultural and political complexities surrounding female genital mutilation.

That was the project that brought Walker and Parmar together. Today, Walker calls the filmmaker "sister friend." When Parmar suggested a film about the author's incredible life, Walker trusted Parmar with her story.

"(Parmar) has the courage to go where it takes," Walker said. "She's a genius and a warrior and not many people can do that."

Born on a plantation in the cotton fields of Georgia, Walker became the first Black woman to win a Pulitzer Prize for fiction. She has been a Guggenheim fellow, a Merrill fellow, a Radcliffe Institute fellow, a National Book Award winner and has contributed to over 30 issues of Ms. Magazine, where she was a contributing editor.

Walker worked with Parmar on all three of the films to be shown at the Sonoma festival, and plays a role in each of them.

In the film "A Place of Rage," which debuted in 1991, Angela Davis, June Jordan and Walker are interviewed and celebrated on the topics of civil rights, Black power, LGBTQ+ rights and the feminist movement. The prominent women look back on how the fabric of America's culture was altered by Rosa Parks and Fannie Lou Hamer.

Walker, a life-long feminist and civil rights activist, believes that such films can inspire a new way of thinking, which is integral to an awakened society.

“(After the event) we’ll have a counter force of awakened people who understand realities they didn’t know before,” Walker said. “I hope they feel connected after seeing these films.”

Walker has challenged America’s way of thinking since “The Color Purple” was placed on banned book lists well before the recent push to further restrict certain texts in states like Florida.

“Parents have called ‘The Color Purple’ ‘smut’ and ‘X-rated’ and cited concerns about its ‘troubling ideas about race relations, man’s relationship to God, African history and human sexuality.’ It was banned in Souderton, Pennsylvania, Area School District in 1992 and removed from school libraries in Fairfax County and Newport News, Virginia,” [Insider wrote in April](#).

Walker said, “If we expect to have a future, or even a present, where we exist, we have to give an example to the world of what that looks like. We have to wake up.”

Though the novel has long been a source of debate for school librarians, a new version of the film will hit theaters on Christmas Day. The original movie adaption, directed by Spielberg and starring Glover, Whoopi Goldberg, Margaret Avery and Oprah Winfrey, premiered in 1985 and was nominated for 11 Academy Awards. Walker co-produced the remake, a musical set in magical realism, which is directed by Blitz Bazawule and stars Halle Bailey, Elizabeth Marvel and Taraji P. Henson.

During the Sonoma event, Parmar will also be recognized with the “SIFF | Musea Center Women In Film” award, which is accompanied by a \$5,000 grant.

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