



PEN America Mobilizes Literary Community to Safeguard U.S. Authors Facing Harassment and Threats

Hachette Book Group, Macmillan Publishers, and Penguin Random House Join New Safety Initiative to Support Authors Amid Escalating Book Bans

(NEW YORK, April 10, 2026)— PEN America, with support from major publishing houses and literary agencies, today announced plans to establish a U.S. Author Safety Program to help protect writers facing harassment and threats driven by a pernicious wave of censorship that is eroding free expression and disrupting authors' professional lives.

Building on years of work [opposing book bans](#) and supporting U.S. [journalists](#) under attack online, the writers organization is expanding its expertise to meet a growing need for safety support in the literary community. As part of its mission to celebrate literature and defend free expression, PEN America plans to offer safety training, consultations, resources and peer support for U.S. authors who are facing harassment and security risks connected to their work.

"We have heard from countless authors, illustrators, and translators who are under siege, fending off a steady stream of abuse and threats, online and at book events," said **Clarisse Rosaz Shariyf**, co-chief executive officer of PEN America. "Through this new program, the literary and publishing community is stepping up together because writers should not be forced to choose between their safety and their voice. For years PEN America has helped journalists cope with online harassment, and we have fought for the freedom to write, read, and learn. Now, we are bringing all that experience together to meet the moment. Every writer silenced by intimidation is a loss for readers and for our democracy."

Among the participating publishing houses are three of the "Big Five," with Hachette Book Group (HBG) and Macmillan Publishers serving as lead partners working with PEN America. Penguin Random House, along with HBG bestselling author **David Baldacci**, also joined the effort as did The New York Community Trust, with a special grant to support NY-based writers facing harassment.

To date, these supporters have contributed nearly \$1 million toward the establishment of the program. PEN America is seeking to raise more than \$2 million in total, calling on other publishers, agencies, and donors to step up to expand resources for this vital work. PEN America is also holding an auction this spring in which bestselling authors, including **Jodi**

Picoult, Jean Korelitz, Jennifer Egan, and Lee Child, will be auctioning off character names in their forthcoming books with proceeds going to the program.

In 2023, PEN America worked with HBG to deliver a series of digital safety workshops that reached nearly 200 HBG authors and publishing professionals, offering sessions on defending against online abuse, doxing, and other intimidation tactics. These programs – together with a broader pilot supported by Scholastic Corp. which reached 300 authors and their allies -- helped shape the new U.S. Author Safety Program's focus and curriculum.

David Shelley, CEO of Hachette Book Group and Hachette UK and a PEN America trustee, said: "There have probably never been as many threats to authors' safety as there are currently in the U.S. At HBG, we're proud to support this much-needed program from PEN America that will give writers a wide range of professional resources to help them deal with threats to their safety, online and offline. From early workshops, the response has been universally positive, and I think this is going to be a hugely impactful program."

Jon Yaged, CEO of Macmillan Publishers said, "Macmillan believes authors should be able to write, publish, and engage with readers without fear for their safety. As book bans continue to rise, we're seeing more authors face harassment simply for doing their work. This partnership with PEN America is about making sure writers have the support and resources they need to navigate those risks, and to keep telling the stories that matter. Protecting authors is essential to protecting the freedom to read."

PEN America first launched its digital safety program in 2018 to support journalists and news organizations bearing the brunt of online attacks. Since then, the organization has collaborated with more than 250 newsrooms, universities, nonprofits, and professional associations through training, events, and consultations. Altogether, the program has provided more than 22,000 people with practical guidance on how to navigate doxing, cyber mobs, hate speech, and threats; PEN America's [Field Manual](#) and other digital safety resources have drawn millions of views online.

As book bans began surging nationwide, PEN America adapted this approach to specifically support authors whose books were being challenged or removed from public schools and libraries. In a 2025 survey of its membership, PEN America found that: 66% of respondents reported feeling less safe or more at risk in connection with their writing than they had five years earlier; 77% reported being concerned with digital safety and online harassment in connection to their work; and nearly one third said that they will be more cautious in the coming years about what they write about.

The troubling experiences of two bestselling authors whose books have been banned in schools—**Jodi Picoult** and **Jonathan Evison** — illustrate the trend. Picoult, one of the most frequently banned authors, has spoken of being harassed and threatened online after posting comments about political figures, underscoring the personal risk authors face for engaging in public debate.

“We are living in an era where being an author can be a risky job, as writers are being threatened with violence and harassed for their activism and their identities,” said Picoult, a PEN America Board of Trustees member. “As one of those targeted authors who received death threats, PEN America’s safety team was a critical resource for me at a very dark time. You don’t realize how much you value safety until it’s gone.”

Evison first experienced backlash against his 2018 novel *Lawn Boy* the morning after a fall 2021 Texas school district board meeting when he woke up to a flood of emails and social media messages. “I started opening these messages, and the first one was a death threat,” he was [quoted saying](#) “The next one was calling me a pedophile and a groomer. And the next one was describing horrible things sexually about my daughters...and I’m like, ‘What in the hell is going on?’”

“Navigating the digital world as an author is more challenging than ever,” said bestselling author [Robyn Harding](#) who participated in those 2023 workshops. “I’m grateful that there are supports like the PEN America / HBG workshop on digital safety to provide support and guidance.”

When the new safety program is launched, authors will be able to connect with the safety team directly, as well as through their publishers, agents, editors, literary organizations, and writers membership groups. The program will be tailored to authors’ unique needs, taking into account that they often work independently, without the institutional support of an employer, that they need a strong public and online presence, and that they need to be able travel to literary events without fear for their safety.

PEN America expects to offer: safety training for authors, writers’ groups, professional associations, literary organizations, publishing houses, agencies, and bookstores; multimedia safety resources; one-on-one and small-group consults with safety experts; and access to peer support. These resources will be free for individual authors.

About PEN America

PEN America stands at the intersection of literature and human rights to protect free expression in the United States and worldwide. We champion the freedom to write, recognizing the power of the word to transform the world. Our mission is to unite writers and their allies to celebrate creative expression and defend the liberties that make it possible. Learn more at pen.org.

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