

KAO KALIA YANG

“Yang powerfully demonstrates that much of what society doesn’t hold valuable—talents that don’t translate into monetary or educational success—still carry immense value.” — *Library Journal*

Kao Kalia Yang is a Hmong-American author, film-maker, and teacher; she is also a co-founder of ‘Words Wanted,’ a company dedicated to helping immigrants with writing, translating, and business services. Her writing and speaking is passionate and eloquent as she seeks to deepen the understanding of the human condition in order to garner more compassion in the world.

Kalia was born in Ban Vinai Refugee Camp in 1980; she and her family came to Minnesota as refugees in the summer of 1987, and her first book, *The Latehomecomer: A Hmong Family Memoir*, reflects upon this move. It is a first-hand account of the journey that many Hmong people had to make from place to place in order to find ‘home. A review by *Publishers Weekly* praises Kalia, “Yang tells her family's story with grace; she narrates their struggles, beautifully weaving in Hmong folklore and culture.” It is the first Hmong-authored book to gain national distribution from a literary press, the only book to have ever garnered two Minnesota Book Awards, the best selling book in Coffee House Press History, and earned a NEA Big Read title.

Her latest, *The Song Poet: A Memoir of my Father*, is the first Hmong book to ever receive national recognition and representation. Jane Hamilton-Merritt proclaims that Kalia’s writing “allows us to hear the whispered sorrows and hopes of those transplanted onto foreign soil among strangers.”

When she’s not in front of an audience inspiring social change and awareness, Kalia raises twin sons that keep her and her husband busy at their home in Minneapolis.