

# A GATHERING TO CELEBRATE AND REMEMBER RICHARD MCCANN



**FRIDAY, MARCH 12 6PM EST**  
HOSTED BY MARIE HOWE, NICK FLYNN & MICHAEL KLEIN

Please join us on Zoom as we remember our beloved friend and teacher.

We welcome you to speak or simply listen – whichever you choose,  
we all will benefit from your presence.

If you would like to read something of Richard's or something you have written,  
or if you want to tell a story or speak of him, you will have an opportunity  
to sign up in the chat area during the Zoom call. We will ask folks to speak  
in the order that they signed up.

We ask you to please keep your remarks to three minutes so that everyone  
who wishes may have a chance to speak.

We look forward to seeing all of you then.

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## WE REMEMBER OUR BELOVED FRIEND

**Richard McCann**, a beloved writer long associated with The Fine Arts Work Center died on January 25, in Washington DC. He had been twice a Fellow at the Work Center (1993-1994 and 1972-1973), served on the Board of Trustees from 2000-2008, and taught writing for many years in the Summer Program. Richard was Professor Emeritus of Literature in the MFA program in Creative Writing at American University. Countless writers, not only at AU but in the MFA program at Vermont College and in the Summer Program of The Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown remember his brilliance, boldness, his love of sentences, style, and language; his generous heart and his uncontainable wit. A lyrical and syntactically elegant writer, Richard McCann is the author of *Ghost Letters*, a collection of poems, and *Mother of Sorrows*, a work of fiction the author Michael Cunningham called “almost unbearably beautiful.” Richard was the co-editor, with Michael Klein, of *Things Shaped in Passing: More “Poets for Life” Writing from the AIDS Pandemic*. At the time of his death, Richard was completing a memoir, *The Resurrectionist*, which explores the experience and meaning of illness and mortality through a narrative about his experience as a liver transplant recipient. His essay, “The Resurrectionist” was selected for *Best American Essays, 2000*.

Richard was born December 12, 1949, in Cleveland Ohio. He is preceded in death by his parents, Richard McCann and Marie McCann Key, and his brother David. He is survived by his brother Jeff, and a vast family of devoted friends.

As Richard wrote in his last essay titled “Waiting,” “Thank you dear world that I crave for showing me your bright and living face in his face.” He was widely and extravagantly loved. He always will be.

“Richard made me feel, whenever I was with him, that I was exactly where I was meant to be,” remembers **Jack Pierson**.

**Genine Lentine** shares, “Richard McCann. I cannot begin to describe his beauty, the incredible kindness in his face, but I can call forth his laugh so specifically, and what it felt like to tell Richard a story, to know that no nuance went unheard. As I take in this news, I’m flooded with images and exchanges I want to share.” For now, I’m calling forth what it felt like sitting around the table in Richard’s FAWC class, in that generous field he created for each person and whatever we brought to that room, whatever carried us there. ‘What have you been given?’ he asked. As people started to unspool accounts of what they’d been given, what they spoke of might in another room sound like people talking about what they’d lost. For each person, you could actually hear in their breathing that their lives were becoming more available to them as Richard listened. It was as if everyone around that table in Studio 10 was handed a new life, and that life was the life that had been theirs all along.”

**Mark Adams** also shares, “Brave and loving, Richard never lost a youthful sense of mischief and a willingness to support the adventures of his comrades. He was always on board with a sly wink. He could empathize with tragedy, but his mode was a heroic dignity and humor amidst any setback. His parting laugh was always saying, ‘Go out there and show ‘em what you got.’”

**Victoria Redel** remembers, “Richard had a wide-open, wild, curious, discerning mind and heart. And did I say hilarious?”

**Nick Flynn** recounts, “One day I went with Richard to a graveyard in Truro so he could show me the spot he’d picked out for himself. Bought and paid for. It seemed so unlikely – even through the fragility of his transplant his spirit was so achingly alive. This was years ago, but even today, I can feel it, that ache.”

**Michael Klein** adds, “Richard called me his brother and I was his brother, in many ways. He had a brilliance and a vulnerability that was both familiar and surprising, if that makes sense. We were both very open with each other and his honesty – particularly around events in my life when I sought his council – was smart and direct, even when I didn’t want to hear it. He also had a completely original way of thinking, both about his life and, especially, in his own writing. His essay on his liver transplant, “The Resurrectionist” is still, I think, one of the most stunning essays I’ve ever read. I teach it every semester, as a way to illustrate how imagination is still essential, even in non-fiction. To imagine, as he imagines in that essay, who the person is who has to die in order for him to continue his own living, is so humbling and moving and, for me, is a key to who Richard was as a whole person: curious, restless, hysterically funny, but also sad. And that sadness only enlarged his magnanimous, beating heart. Some of you probably know what he wanted written on his gravestone: “Do you like me?” – funny, of course – but also, the sense that even in dying – maybe, especially with dying – we still belong to people. And Richard, lion hearted romantic, certainly belonged to us – as in, brother, co-conspirator, pal.”

And **Marie Howe** concludes, “Richard was a brother to me for over 30 years. Richard and I shared a saying during difficult times and during times of joy, times of transition, and transformation. It was: ‘Right here, as it is; Right now, as it is.’ We said it to each other on the phone, in emails, and, when we were physically together, we said it aloud together – like a mantra, prayer of acceptance and celebration. Even this impossible-to-bear loss now. I hear him say it: ‘Right here, as it is. Right now, as it is.’ Then I hear him laughing.”

## THE RICHARD MCCANN FUND FOR SUMMER PROGRAM SCHOLARSHIPS

Please join us in honoring our beloved friend with a gift to support  
the Fine Arts Work Center’s Richard McCann Fund  
for Summer Program Scholarships

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