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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Ethiopian Novelist and Booker Prize Finalist, Maaza Mengiste to Deliver 8th Annual Pluralism Lecture

Mengiste's virtual lecture to address ways of reckoning with difficult histories of war and colonization to help build a more inclusive future

Ottawa, ON May 11, 2021 – As societies worldwide grapple with racism and inequality rooted in the legacies of imperialism and colonization, award-winning author of *The Shadow King*, Ethiopian author, **Maaza Mengiste**, will deliver the 8th Annual Pluralism Lecture via livestream on May 19, 2021, addressing how to approach difficult history in ways that can promote belonging over division. Following the Lecture, she will be interviewed by CBC Ideas host and producer, **Nahlah Ayed**. The livestream can be viewed at: <https://www.pluralism.ca/event/maaza-mengiste-8th-annual-pluralism-lecture/>



Co-presented by the [Global Centre for Pluralism](#) and the [University of British Columbia](#), this year's Annual Pluralism Lecture features an introduction by **Princess Zahra Aga Khan**, Global Centre for Pluralism Board Member, reflecting on how the pandemic has created an urgency for conversations and actions centered on building respect, empathy, and a more equitable, just and prosperous future for all.

Now in its 8th year, the Annual Pluralism Lecture series presents an opportunity to learn from extraordinary individuals whose work exemplifies pluralism in action. Past lecturers have included South African freedom fighter Justice Albie Sachs; then Chief Justice of Canada Beverley McLachlin; and current UN Secretary-General António Guterres, among others.

"We are thrilled to have Maaza Mengiste delivering this year's Annual Pluralism Lecture. Her writing tackles issues at the very heart of pluralism – collective memory, historical narratives and identity — and offers us the opportunity to learn about how to build and strengthen societies where everyone belongs. This is so critically important. Literature can help us see past the polarisation and politicisation of these issues, to bring us to a more constructive place," said Meredith Preston McGhie, Secretary General of the Global Centre for Pluralism.

"The University of British Columbia is honoured to be co-presenting the 8th Annual Pluralism Lecture. In striving for a better world, it is essential to unpack and carefully consider the difficult, sometimes painful, lessons from our past. By learning from those mistakes, and addressing them with tangible solutions that benefit all, we can move forward towards more pluralistic societies, together," said Dr. Santa J. Ono, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University of British Columbia.

Related Events:

Ahead of the Annual Pluralism Lecture, Maaza Mengiste will speak to University of British Columbia students and community members about her book, *The Shadow King*, in an online masterclass as part of the UBC Connects programming, on May 18, 2021. More details about this event are available at: <https://events.ubc.ca/ubc-connects/>

UBC Connects is a series of public events that provides a platform for esteemed thought leaders to share their unique perspectives and experiences with the UBC community and beyond. Whether in a classroom, lecture hall, and most recently a webcast, UBC connects the dots, and people, to shed light on the world's most pressing issues.

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About Maaza Mengiste

Maaza Mengiste is a critically acclaimed novelist and essayist whose work examines the individual lives at stake during migration, war, and exile. She was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and lived in Nigeria and Kenya before moving to the United States. Mengiste's debut novel, *Beneath the Lion's Gaze* (2010), was named one of *The Guardian's* Ten Best Contemporary African Books. Her latest novel, *The Shadow King* (2019), was called "one of the most beautiful novels of the year" by National Public Radio and was a 2020 Booker Prize finalist. The winner of the 2020 Literature Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Mengiste's honours include the Creative Capital Award, a Fulbright Scholarship, and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and Puterbaugh Festival of International Literature & Culture.

About the Global Centre for Pluralism

The Global Centre for Pluralism is an independent, charitable organization founded by His Highness the Aga Khan and the Government of Canada. The Centre works with policy leaders, educators and community builders around the world to amplify and implement the transformative power of pluralism. For more information, visit www.pluralism.ca

About the University of British Columbia

The University of British Columbia is a global centre for research and teaching, consistently ranked among the top 20 public universities in the world. Since 1915, UBC's entrepreneurial spirit has embraced innovation and challenged the status quo. UBC encourages its students, staff and faculty to challenge convention, lead discovery and explore new ways of learning. At UBC, bold thinking is given a place to develop into ideas that can change the world.