

'Maid' author Stephanie Land brings story of poverty and parenting to Stark Library event

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Key Points

Stephanie Land, author of the bestselling book, "Maid," will be featured at Tuesday's Stark Library event at the Canton Palace Theatre.

Land's book inspired the hit Netflix television series, "Maid."

The author's new book, "Class: A Memoir of Motherhood, Hunger and Higher Education" will be released next month.

Author Stephanie Land admits to feeling the pressure of following up her memoir sensation, "Maid."

"Whether or not your first book is a success, the second one ... absolutely needs to be," she told The Canton Repository in a recent phone interview. "So there's a ton of pressure on anybody with their second book and kind of securing the trajectory of their career and if there will be a third."

Land's first book gave readers a voyeuristic peek inside the world of cleaning homes for the wealthy while struggling to pay rent and provide food for her young daughter. She was also a survivor of domestic violence.

Following Land's viral magazine essay on the subject, her book "Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive" became a New York Times bestseller and inspired the hit Netflix television series, "Maid." The show set a Netflix streaming record with 67 million viewers in four weeks.

The 45-year-old author will be discussing her unlikely journey when she gives a presentation at the Canton Palace Theatre on Tuesday as part of the Stark Library's Dr. Audrey Lavin Speaking of Books Author Series.

Admission is free but reservations are required for the 6:30 p.m. event at <https://www.starklibrary.org/>. The book "Maid" will be available for purchase; doors open at 5:45 p.m.

Land's new book, "Class: A Memoir of Motherhood, Hunger and Higher Education" will be released on Nov. 7.

The writer described her new book as a sequel of sorts to "Maid."

"A lot of what went into 'Class,' is what I wanted to include in the first book, but I just kind of ran out of white space or ran out of pages," said Land, whose varied writings also appear in The New York Times and other publications. "So it very much picks up right where 'Maid' left off and just continues on with the story of how I got myself through college (in her early 30s)."

In a 20-minute chat with The Repository in advance of her visit to Canton, the 2014 University of Montana graduate discussed her new book, the "Maid" television show, and what it's like to go from working single mom mired in poverty to a star author whose work was praised by President Barack Obama.

Are the themes of poverty and parenthood still present in your writings and new book?

All of those themes are definitely still present unfortunately, but I think a lot of what my writing tries to accomplish is just showing that single parents are just as loving ... and are working extremely hard, and it's without a lot of much needed support that's not available to us by a lot of government assistance programs.

Explain the importance of parenting in your life both before and after the release of "Maid."

My daughter, she just turned 16, so she's in high school, she's driving, she's a cheerleader, and she's got a job, and I still want everything for her, even though I'm in a much more privileged situation, but I think that's a universal want, I would hope – that it is just as a parent you want what's best for your child.

And for my experience, it's the most heartbreaking feeling to not be able to provide the basic needs, and food and shelter are the two basic needs that I struggled with the most.

And it baffles my mind that my daughter had to experience that with me. Just as a country, we should be able to take care of our kids and the people who are taking care of the kids. It really saddens me that 10 to 15 years later, I'm still writing essays (about it) and talking to people about how we lack resources, and it's not that we don't have them, it's just that we don't want to do it.

Did your first book and the TV show, "Maid" have any positive and tangible impact on problems facing society?

The series premiered in October 2021 two years ago, the National Domestic Violence Hotline received the most calls that it ever had in a month, and I think in its 25-year history.

And a lot of the change that I have seen personally is hearing from survivors and that watching the show helped them realize that they were in an abusive situation and convinced them to find the resources and strength to leave.

What subjects or social issues do you want to write about but haven't yet?

I have four pregnancy losses. In 2020, my husband and I, we got married four years ago and were trying to have a kid together, and it didn't work out, so there isn't really a lot out there written about pregnancy loss and miscarriage.

Especially the medication that I needed to help my body ... is now considered abortion medication, and it's not available in a lot of states in this country. I think that is something I'll write about eventually once I give it time

to simmer.

What is it like to go from poverty to bestselling author?

That's usually the subject of my therapy sessions. It's hard; there has definitely been a feeling of wondering where I belong just in society because for so many years, I was told without a doubt where I belonged, and it wasn't easy to occupy spaces that people felt entitled to like college or even being at a restaurant or having fun with other people.

What role did your book play in the creation of the Netflix series, "Maid"?

I think the appropriate term is more inspired by – the series was fictionalized and they added characters, and I was not involved in any of that. I answered a bunch of questions and showed them a bunch of pictures and toured around Port Townsend (Washington) with them; in the series it's called Port Hampstead.

They really very much tried to recreate that area, but I love what Molly Smith Metzler, the creator and showrunner, did with my book, and the writers did some really magical things in bringing it to life.

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