



News Release

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Century Hosts Author Kao Kalia Yang March 3

Kao Kalia Yang, author of the prize-winning Hmong family memoir *The Latecomer*, will speak at Century College on Wednesday, March 3, at 7 p.m. in the West Campus Theatre. Yang also will address students at 10 a.m. on Thursday, March 4, in the West Campus Theatre. Both events are free and open to the public.

Yang's book, which won a Minnesota Book Award for Creative Nonfiction in 2009, has been this year's Common Book at Century College. Her appearance is sponsored by the Century College Speaker Series.

A graduate of St. Paul Public Schools, Carleton College and Columbia University, Yang narrates her family's struggles while weaving in Hmong folklore and culture. She makes it clear that the book's existence – and her family's existence – is something of a miracle. For every Hmong person who emigrated out of Thailand, two other Hmong didn't make it. Her saga is the story of how the survivors came to America to find belonging and a place to call home.

Born in Thailand's Ban Vinai Refugee Camp, Yang immigrated with her family to St. Paul at age six. Her family lived in the McDonough housing project, and books from the St. Paul Public Library Bookmobile fed her imagination. Yang filled her time with reading while her mom and dad worked multiple jobs to feed the family. Yang's father is an alum of Century College, where he studied automotive technology.

Yang wrote her book as a tribute to her grandmother. Published by Coffee House Press in 2008, the book took two years of research.



Photo: Kao Kalia Yang