

Wally Lamb

Critically Acclaimed Best-Selling Author

Speaking Topics:

- The Transformative and Healing Power of Writing
- The Interplay of Fiction and Non-Fiction in *The Hour I First Believed*
- Couldn't Keep It to Myself: Testimonies From Our Imprisoned Sisters
- An Evening With Wally Lamb

Travels from Connecticut

Wally Lamb is the critically acclaimed and beloved author of *She's Come Undone* and *I Know This Much Is True* and the editor of *Couldn't Keep It To Myself* and *I'll Fly Away*, two volumes of writing from the writing workshop he runs at York Correctional Institution. Both of his novels were #1 *New York Times* best-sellers and Oprah's Book Club selections. Lamb's books are neither short nor simple, but like a James Patterson of emotions, he pulls readers in and doesn't let go. His third *New York Times* best-seller, *The Hour I First Believed* (Harper), is a profound and challenging work of fiction, which has been hailed by critics across the country. Lamb proves himself a virtuoso storyteller, assembling a variety of voices and an ensemble of characters rich enough to evoke all of humanity.

Lamb contributes his time as a volunteer facilitator at York Correctional Institution, a women's prison in Niantic, Connecticut. In 2003, Lamb published the first collection of writings by the students at his writing workshop at the Institution in *Couldn't Keep It To Myself*. Writing, Lamb had found, was an unexpected and transforming way for these women to recapture their humanity and the hope that many of them had long since lost. The resulting collection offered a revealing window into the souls of once-powerless women, as they learned what it meant to gain control over their voices and, in many cases, their lives. The publication stirred controversy when the state of Connecticut attempted to sue the writers, but after *60 Minutes* aired a piece celebrating the program, and one of the writers won a prestigious PEN/Newman's Own First Amendment Award – the program and the book were vindicated.

Lamb returned with *I'll Fly Away*, a new volume of intimate, searching pieces from the York workshop. Here, in works of memoir, poetry, and introspection, 20 women, some of them familiar from *Couldn't Keep It To Myself*, many heard here for the first time, share the experiences that shaped them from childhood, and that trouble and inspire them to this day. There are stories of anger, physical abuse, rape, and emotional distress, but also more positive memories: of expressions of love, of gifts received and remembered, of light moments from happier times. These portraits, vignettes, and stories are painted in many colors: innocence and pain, denial, redemption, and transcendence. At their heart, they all testify to the same core truth: the universal value of knowing oneself, and changing one's life, through the power of the written word.

Lamb was the director of the Writing Center at the Norwich Free Academy in Norwich, Connecticut from 1989-1998 and an Associate Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Connecticut. He holds a B.A. and an M.A. in Education from the University of Connecticut and an M.F.A. in Writing from Vermont College. He lives in Connecticut with his wife, Christine, and their three sons.