

Tracie McMillan

FULL BIO

Updated March 30, 2019

Since the start of her career in the late 1990s, Tracie McMillan has written about social equity in America, beginning with welfare reform in New York City. That work led her to examine our meals in order to plumb the depths of social and economic class in the U.S., and to write the award-winning *New York Times* bestseller, *The American Way of Eating: Undercover at Walmart, Applebee's, Farm Fields and the Dinner Table*. The book—McMillan's first—mixes immersive reporting, undercover investigative techniques and “moving first-person narrative” (*Wall Street Journal*), and argues for thinking of fresh, healthy food as a public and social good—a stance that inspired *The New York Times* to call her “a voice the food world needs” and Rush Limbaugh to single her out as an “overeducated” “authoress” and “threat to liberty.” The book is taught at universities across the country, across a wide range of disciplines. It has also helped lead discussion in the political realm. In 2012, *Congressional Quarterly* used McMillan's work to frame that influential publication's discussion of the Farm Bill.

In 2013, *The American Way of Eating* was awarded the prestigious Sidney Hillman Prize for Book Journalism in recognition of her work's commitment to the public interest, and a Books for a Better Life Award, a publishing industry touchstone which recognizes excellence in books that carry uplifting messages. *AWE* was also named a finalist for a Goodreads Reader's Choice Award; an International Association of Culinary Professionals Food Matters award; an Investigative Reporters and Editors Award; and a James Beard Journalism Award (considered “the Oscars of the food world”).

McMillan has also won significant acclaim apart from her work as an author. In 2013, McMillan won a James Beard Journalism Award for a feature on farm labor she wrote for *The American Prospect*, and in 2012, *Whole Living* magazine named her a “Food Visionary.” Earlier in her career, while a managing editor at the New York City magazine *City Limits*, McMillan won numerous awards and honors for her features on poverty, welfare, child care and food. Her 2005 series, “Getting By,” earned her the James Aronson Award for Social Justice Journalism and a finalist nod for the Livingston Awards, the nation's most prestigious award for young journalists. Her 2004 feature on food access in New York City's poorer corners won the Harry Chapin Media Award and was a finalist for the James Beard Journalism Awards. She has also received an honorable mention in the Casey Medals for Meritorious Journalism. She has received fellowship and grant support from the Fund for Investigative Journalism, the Food and Environmental Reporting Network, the Mesa Refuge, and the Wesleyan Writer's Conference.

In 2013, she was named a Knight-Wallace Journalism Fellow at the University of Michigan, a year after she was named a Senior Fellow at the Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism. In the past, she has received support and accolades from the Fund for Investigative Journalism; the Mesa Refuge for Writers; and the Wesleyan Writers Conference. She currently serves on the awards committee for the James Beard Journalism Awards. In 2014, she was named the Koeppel Journalism Fellow at Wesleyan University, where she taught a course on writing about inequality, and in 2017-20189, she spent three semesters teaching writing at New York University to Master's students in its prestigious Food Studies program.

Today, McMillan is a sought-after lecturer, speaking across the country about her work and the topics it covers, from farm labor to cooking, America's growing class divide to the insidious power of racism in our society. She has delivered lectures at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Mississippi at Oxford, and the prestigious Chautauqua Institution; participated in TEDMed and the U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance Food Dialogues; and has appeared on national television programs such as "The Rachel Maddow Show," as well as national radio broadcasts including "Marketplace," "The Splendid Table," and "All Things Considered." She is most proud of her writing in the *New York Times* opinion section, where she has explored the nature of "White Resentment on the Night Shift at Walmart;" the political implications of conflating race and class; and being drugged by a coworker in an Applebee's kitchen, which led to a sexual assault.

As a freelance journalist, she has written for a range of publications including the *New York Times*, *National Geographic*, the *Washington Post*, the *American Prospect*, *Slate*, *Harper's*, *Saveur* and *Mother Jones*. In 2018, her coverage of the future of food for *National Geographic* was a cover story in ten international editions, and in early 2019 she published a groundbreaking investigative piece for *Mother Jones* chronicling the increasing monetization of the safety net. She was also the architect and author of *Food & Wine's* new annual feature, "Great Restaurants to Work For," and oversaw intensive background checks of its awardees. Her work has also been included in multiple collections, and can be found in *The Dirt: Dispatches from the Front Lines of Food and Farming*, *Best Food Writing 2013*, *The Detroit Anthology*, and *Local Food Environments*.

Born to a lawn equipment salesman and an English major, McMillan grew up in a rural town of 10,000 between the exurbs of Detroit and the suburbs of Flint. She grew up cooking Tuna Helper and baking pastries from scratch. McMillan's first job in food came at age 14, when she made caramel apples at a local orchard for less than minimum wage; her next job was as an attendant at a Big Boy salad bar. She can frequently be reporting around the U.S. and abroad, but she has lived in New York City since enrolling at NYU on scholarship in 1994. She now splits her time between Brooklyn and Detroit.

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