

Keys to Life

BY WENDY VON BUSKIRK
STAFF WRITER

As Linda Solomon was busy preparing to launch her new book "The Key," she locked herself out of her office. Solomon called Birmingham Locksmith, and when Bob Rovinsky opened the door, he was delighted to see the room spilling over with all the keys she had collected for the book.

"He started telling me all kinds of key stories, and showed me a key on his key ring that belonged to his late grandmother's home," Solomon said. "He agreed that keys represent turning points in people's lives." Solomon was so impressed by Rovinsky's enthusiasm, she invited him to speak about the history of keys at her Borders Birmingham book signing on Oct. 19. In her second book, "The Key: Celebrated People Unlock the Secrets to Life" (\$17.95, Stewart Tabori Chang), Solomon asked more than 50 celebrities to offer 'keys' to various life lessons. Solomon shot creative, black and white photos of keys to accompany every quote.

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She carefully selected each key and its setting to represent the personalities in the book.

Dolly Parton's "Key to Staying on Top" is adorned with an ornate rose, and is sticking out of a jelly jar.

"It reminded me of Dolly, because she's so down to earth," Solomon said.



Linda Solomon collected keys of all shapes and sizes for her new book "The Key: Celebrated People Unlock Their Secrets to Life."

'Key' Events

Book Signing and Beauty Party

When: 5-9 p.m., Thursday, Oct. 18

Where: Saks Fifth Avenue, Somerset Collection,

What: Meet Linda Solomon along with celebrity guests featured in her latest book, "The Key." The evening also includes cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, makeup artists, gifts-with-purchase, entertainment, psychics and prizes. Tickets: Patron tickets, \$75, include a private reception with Linda Solomon at 5 p.m. and an autographed copy of her book. Friend Tickets are \$50. Both levels include a \$50 SFA gift card and benefit Henry Ford Health System Josephine Ford Cancer Center.

Information: Call (313) 876-9237

Borders Book Signing

When: 7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 19

Where: Borders Birmingham, 34300 Woodward Ave.

What: A discussion, Q&A and book signing with Linda Solomon. Special guest, Bob Rovinsky, CPL, of Birmingham Locksmith.

Information: Admission is free. Call (248) 203-0005.

Barnes & Noble Contest

When: Beginning when the book hits shelves in early October.

Where: Barnes & Noble Booksellers, 6575 Telegraph Road, Bloomfield Hills

What: Shoppers who purchase "The Key" at this location will be entered to win the physical "Key to Hope" used with Melissa Etheridge's quote in Solomon's book. The drawing will be held Saturday, Dec. 8.

Information: 248-540-4209

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Aretha Franklin's "Key to Staying on Top" is an antique clock key placed at the center of a 45 recording of "Respect." Edsel Ford's "Key to a Legacy" is a set of vintage Ford keys shot atop a leather car seat. Hilary Duff's "Key to Being Grounded," is a True Value hardware key thrown on the ground.

Solomon, a Bloomfield Hills-based author and photojournalist (full disclosure: she started her career at the Observer Eccentric) said she has always been intrigued by keys. She saved the key to her five-year diary, her first car and her Honeymoon suite. While the inspiration for her book began there, she had to embark on a quest to find more.

Solomon's mother produced a velvet pouch full of keys from her grandmother, and her sister, Today Show Entertainment Correspondent Jill Rappaport, dug up hotel keys she had kept from family vacations.

"I hit every flea market, antique show, estate sale. It was hard to find physical keys to match the messages," Solomon said. "They're all very symbolic."

It took Solomon a year to gather all the materials for the book. She collected quotes via e-mail, tapping everyone from actors (Tim Allen) and athletes (Tiger Woods) to authors (Elmore Leonard), journalists (Katie Couric) and businesspeople (Donald Trump). Solomon has extensive connections, gained in part through photographing the Academy Awards for more than 20 years, and shooting her first celebrity book "People We Know, Horses They Love."

Most everyone she approached agreed to contribute, but the celebrities had no idea she would use photographs of keys alongside their words.

"I didn't tell them. They all trusted me," she said. "People think I'm using their portraits. That's the fun part, it will be a little bit of a surprise for everyone."

Many people urged her to use photos of the celebrities, but Solomon stuck to her vision.

"I wanted to do something totally different. It's all about the metaphor so I didn't want to use faces to distract from the words," she said. "I think we're living in times where we're starved for affirmations and looking for wisdom. These people really have something to say."

Even her agent advised her that photos of the celebrities, many of whom Solomon has shot before, would be an easier sell.

Perhaps that's why the book ends with Solomon's own "Key to Staying Focused."

The image is of a key engraved with the name Solomon, placed atop the lens of her first camera, a Brownie Starflash she got as a gift from her parents when she was a child.

Her quote reads: "With every goal, give it a hundred and fifty percent. Never be dissuaded by rejection. Remember it's just one person's opinion, and that person is wrong."

"The Key: Celebrated People Unlock the Secrets to Life," will hit bookstores in early October. A portion of proceeds will benefit the fight against breast cancer.