AUTHOR PRESS KIT

ORISON PUBLISHERS · 2026

Bob Richley

AUTHOR · MIDDLE-GRADE FICTION

↓ Hi-res headshots

ABOUT

Bob Richley writes stories that help children wrestle with the hardest question there is: what do we do with the prejudice we were taught?

Richley is the author of *Redeeming Rhubarb* (Orison Publishers) — a middle-grade novel about a white mouse who has taught his children that rats are filth, the black rat who saves the mouse's family anyway, and the daughter who refuses to let her father stay that way.

An evangelical Christian, Richley spent three years living in a lesbian community — knowing his neighbors as people and having the conversations most people avoid. He also lived the disaster the novel is built on: the September 2013 Front Range flood. He lives in Colorado and publishes free classroom material from the story.

> *"Enemies can become friends — but it takes a long time to trust."*
>
> BOB RICHLEY, ON THE BOOK

CREDENTIALS & EXPERTISE

WHY HE'S THE RIGHT VOICE

- Three years living as an evangelical Christian in a lesbian community — talking across a divide, not about one
- Lived through the 2013 Boulder flood the novel is built on
- Children's ministry volunteer; BA in mathematics and psychology; Reading With Your Kids "Certified Great Read," 2026

SEGMENTS HE CAN CARRY

- Talking to an 8-to-12-year-old about prejudice without lecturing
- Where a child's bias comes from — and what to do the day your kid repeats something ugly
- Hard material for young readers — drinking, grief, amputation — without traumatizing them; the 2013 flood from the ground up

FIND HIM ONLINE

WEBSITE	bobrichleyauthor.store — free classroom resources	X	@BobWRichley
FACEBOOK	facebook.com/BobRichleyAuthor	AMAZON	Author page

AVAILABILITY, CONTACT & PRESS ASSETS

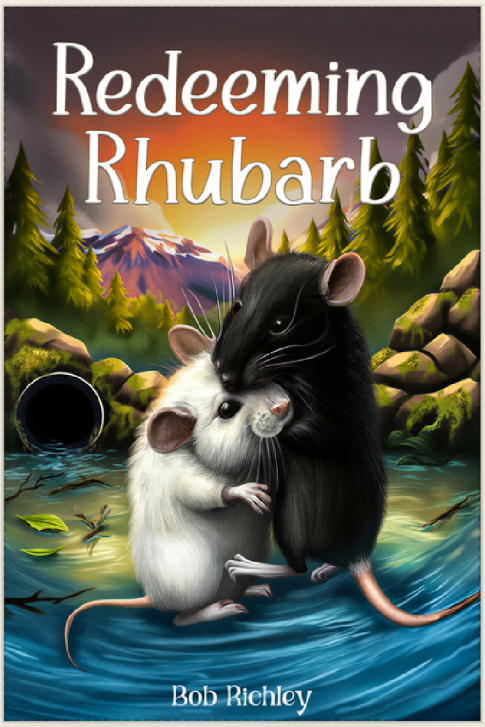
BASED IN
Colorado · Mountain (MT)

INTERVIEWS
Widely available at any daypart, earlier by arrangement

BOOKING
(630) 291-4125
bob.richley@yahoo.com

PRESS ASSETS
Headshots, cover art, review copy, radio segment — all assets, hi-res and free to reproduce

ABOUT THE BOOK



Redeeming Rhubarb

She's been taught that they are evil — until one saves her family.

MIDDLE-GRADE FICTION · SOCIAL ISSUES | BUY THE BOOK →

PUB MAY 22, 2026 | ORISON PUBLISHERS | PAPERBACK, EPUB & AUDIOBOOK

PAPERBACK ISBN-13 978-1971072067 · ISBN-10 1971072060

EPUB ISBN-13 978-1971072111 | ILLUS. JANUGA JANAYAKE

SYNOPSIS

Strawberry the mouse has always known that rats are dangerous — her father, Rhubarb, made sure of it, and he has his reasons: a rat killed his brother. Then a family of black rats moves into the abandoned factory above Boulder, Colorado, and Strawberry, birthday sword in paw and afraid of almost nothing, decides to find out for herself. Rhubarb tries twice to have the rat Barnabas killed. Both times he fails.

Then, on September 11, 2013, the rain stops moving. Bear Canyon Creek climbs its banks and the factory floods. Strawberry loses a leg. And the animal who goes into the water for Rhubarb's wife and children is the rat he left to die. What the flood spares it delivers to Bart, a veterinarian with a war behind him — and above the cages, a mouse who has run out of excuses lies awake beside a sleeping rat, and asks to be forgiven.

9	11,000	1,800	$3B
DEAD IN THE FLOOD	EVACUATED	HOMES DESTROYED	IN DAMAGE · SEPT 2013

Forty-six dated chapters carry the story from a birthday party in June 2013 to a farmhouse porch in March 2014, with the real flood as its spine, lived at ankle height. The casting is deliberate: in his Author's Note to Parents, Richley writes that the species “were intentionally chosen to challenge readers' existing biases about specific animals, helping us recognize how quickly we form a judgment.” Readers arrive rooting for the mouse and flinching at the rat, then spend the book watching that instinct come apart. It is candid about the cost of changing — Rhubarb drinks, and abandons his family in the storm — and the turn, when it comes, is explicitly Christian and earned scene by scene. Back matter includes an illustrated guide to all thirty-odd animals, three poems written by the characters, and discussion prompts for reading together.

ADVANCE PRAISE

> *“An ambitious, emotionally rich middle-grade novel that combines exciting adventure with timeless lessons about grace, redemption, and the courage to see others... through the eyes of compassion.”*
>
> — Reading With Your Kids Podcast, “Certified Great Read”

> *“One of the finest young adult stories I've read in recent memory.”*
>
> — Kristine L., reviewer of 400+ books a year

COVERAGE TO DATE

"Bigotry and shame rooted in the loss of a brother and a childhood with a critical, prejudiced father... an involving, redemptive narrative."	KIRKUS REVIEWS · 2026
Featured	THE DAILY CAMERA, BOULDER, CO · 2026
"Certified Great Read" — a thoughtful adventure that will spark family conversations	READING WITH YOUR KIDS · 2026
"One of the finest young adult stories I've read in recent memory"	PAGES AND PAWS · JUNE 2026
Named to "12 Most Memorable Reads of Summer"	PAGES AND PAWS · AUG 2026
Five-star review of *Redeeming Rhubarb*	READERS' FAVORITE · 2026
Reviewed on Reedsy Discovery	REEDSY DISCOVERY · 2026

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Enemies can become friends — but it takes a long time to trust.** Richley's own summary; the story shows the mechanism rather than asserting it.
- **Bias is inherited before it is chosen.** Rhubarb's children know rats are filth before they have ever met one. Young readers watch a rule get passed down, then watch it break.
- **A child can move an adult.** Strawberry says six words to her father — "I'm ashamed of you, Dad" — and they land harder than any punishment.
- **Forgiveness is something you can be taught to do.** Barnabas forgives because he has been forgiven, and says so out loud — the mechanism is on the page, not left as a moral.
- **Kindness is a habit built by hand.** Two boys who shot kittens with foam darts spend a day shoveling flood mud and feeding a kitten from a dropper — and change.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Richley's premise is blunt: children are absorbing the division around them faster than adults are answering it. His answer takes the subject out of the human register entirely — no one's family is on trial in a story about a mouse and a rat, so a nine-year-old and a grandparent can read the same chapter and argue about it safely. That makes *Redeeming Rhubarb* unusually easy to place: read-aloud and homeschool lists, school and church libraries, parenting segments, and any conversation about how children pick up the attitudes around them.

It is also a September book. The 2013 Front Range flood is more than a decade behind Colorado; this is a children's novel that treats the disaster as living memory and gets the timeline, the creek levels, and the airlifts right — written by someone who was there. For Colorado and Mountain West outlets, a local story. For everyone else, a flood story that turns out to be about who you are willing to save.

SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

01 You could have written this book about people. Why mice and rats — and why make the bigot the white mouse and the rescuer the black rat?

02 You spent three years as an evangelical Christian living in a lesbian community, having the conversations most people avoid. What did that teach you about how prejudice comes apart?

03 Rhubarb isn't a cartoon villain — he lost a brother to rats. How important was it that his prejudice start from a real wound?

04 You lived through the 2013 Boulder flood. What did you see then that ended up in the book?

05 Strawberry is the moral engine of the book, and she's a kid. What do children see about their parents' prejudices that the parents don't?

06 Rhubarb drinks. Strawberry loses a leg. A character dies. How did you decide how much a middle-grade reader can carry?

07 Bart's nephews arrive shooting kittens with foam darts and leave feeding one with a dropper. What actually changes a cruel kid?

08 A parent hears their child repeat something ugly they picked up at school. Based on this book, what should happen next in that house?

EXCERPT

Chapter 39 — Broken Bigotry

From Redeeming Rhubarb · September 14, 2013, 10 p.m. · reprinted with permission

> *"You almost killed him twice, and yet he saved us. I'm ashamed of you, Dad."*
>
> STRAWBERRY, TO HER FATHER — THREE NIGHTS AFTER THE FLOOD

Rhubarb couldn't sleep in his cage the night after the boys cleaned the hospital. His daughter had had some convicting words to say to him before she went to sleep.

"Dad," she'd said gently, "you know I'm alive because of Barnabas. You are alive because of Barnabas. Our family survived because of Barnabas. You almost killed him twice, and yet he saved us. **I'm ashamed of you, Dad.**"

Rhubarb didn't answer. Strawberry had said her piece and fell asleep. His whiskers drooped, his body slumped, and his tail dropped as her words sank in. His paws trembled as he wrestled with himself and his behavior. His daughter was ashamed of him. He was ashamed of himself.

He knew she was right. He had abandoned his family when they needed him. He did not save them. A rat did. He finally admitted in his heart that Barnabas had saved his family and risked his life — after Rhubarb left him to die.

Rhubarb thought about the rats he had known before. They had hurt his family, attacked him, and even killed his brother. But Barnabas was not like them. While other rats had only taken, Barnabas gave freely. Rhubarb had always believed all rats were bad, but now he knew that wasn't true.

Rhubarb was the one with evil and hatred in his heart. He saw that now. He was the one who brought harm to others, including his own family. He began to cry.

"Barnabas! Hey, Barnabas!" Rhubarb couldn't wait to speak to him, and tried to wake him.

"Huh? What?" muttered a weary Barnabas.

"I'm sorry. I've been so, so wrong about you, Barnabas. You and your family are so kind to my family and me. You sacrificed so much for us. Please forgive me," Rhubarb pleaded.

Barnabas smiled. "**You're forgiven, my friend.**"

Rhubarb sobbed. "Why? I've been so mean to you. How can you forgive me so easily?" he asked, his voice barely above a whisper. "After everything I've done."

"Because God has forgiven me, Rhubarb. I've done many things wrong. I hurt my wife. I hurt my pups. I hurt my friends. I did some awful things that I regret... Because I've been forgiven for so much, I can forgive others. God can do the same for you, my friend, Rhubarb."

Rhubarb was silent for a moment. He had always thought he was unacceptable. He had tried to earn his father's love and failed. *Could God really love me?* He suddenly felt the answer in his heart. Rhubarb knew it was true. "Oh, God, forgive me," he prayed.

As Rhubarb uttered his prayer, he felt as though a great weight had been lifted from his shoulders. For the first time in years, he felt truly at peace. His fur softened. He smiled, and his ears drew forward. He closed his eyes, and tears fell.

Tomorrow would be the first day of his new life, free from the weight of hatred and fear. He looked forward to the morning with hope in his heart for the first time.

Further sample chapters, the illustrated character guide, and the full review copy of *Redeeming Rhubarb* are available now.

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