READING AND TALKING ABOUT RACE
An Introduction to ALA’s Great Stories Club

Tuesday, June 30, 2020
Webinar Agenda

• Lainie Castle, ALA PPO
  Program overview and online resources

• Amber Hayes, ALA ODLOS
  EDI support for libraries

• Maria Sachiko Cecire, Bard College
  Deeper Than Our Skins series

• Pamela McCarter, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library
  Leading virtual book clubs

• Q&A

WWW.ALA.ORG/GREATSTORIES
GSC: A Literature-based Library Outreach Program

A Great Stories Club program hosted by the Seattle Public Library, University Branch in partnership with the Interagency Academy Alternative High School at UDYC.
Advisors and Funders

Maria Sachiko Cecire
Bard College

Wini Ashooh
Central Rappahannock Regional Library

Edith Campbell
Cunningham Memorial Library, Indiana State University

Vanessa “Chacha” Centeno
Sacramento Public Library

W.K. Kellogg Foundation

National Endowment for the Humanities
Amber Hayes
Outreach and Communications Program Officer, ALA Office for Diversity, Literacy and Outreach Services (ODLOS)
ODLOS Mission

- Support libraries in creating responsible and all-inclusive spaces to serve and represent entire community
- Decenter power and privilege
- Facilitate conversations around access and identity
- Use a social justice framework
- Strive to create an association culture where this is everybody's everyday work
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Goals

Establish resources and support so libraries and librarians can be effective advocates for the inclusion of all individuals in the life of their community.

Provide safe, respectful space for diverse voices and perspectives.
“[These books help us] look beneath the surface of racism in America to reveal how the past is alive in the present. The theme uses powerful stories of oppression, resistance, suffering, and triumph to identify the roots of racialized experience in the United States, and to inspire discussions around how to construct more equitable futures for the people in our nation and world.”
www.ala.org/greatstories
Digital / Print-Ready Resources

- Series-framing essay
- Book-specific discussion questions
- General discussion questions for ALL books

AN INTRODUCTION TO
THE GREAT STORIES CLUB SERIES

MARIA SACHIKO CECIRE, Director of the Center for Experimental Humanities and Assistant Professor of Literature, Bard College

TEXTS
- Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- Dreaming in Indian: Contemporary Native American Voices, edited by Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale
- Mother of the Sea by Zetta Elliott
- The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano by Sonia Manzano
- Always Running: La Vida Loca: Gang Days in L.A. by Luis J. Rodriguez
- The Shadow Hero by Gene Luen Yang, illustrated by Sonny Liew
“Is there a scene in this book that describes a racially motivated incident, policy, or set of social norms that reminds you of a similar racial reality today? What is it? Does this happen to the same racial/ethnic group as in the book, or different ones (if others, which)? How does seeing history repeat itself affect how you think about America? Do you think race relations are getting better over time in this country or just changing without much improvement?”

– *DREAMING IN INDIAN*: Indian residential schools (p. 30-1) and the children separated from their parents at the U.S. border and placed in facilities around the U.S.; stereotypes from media (Pocahontas, p. 43) …
DEEPER THAN OUR SKINS

The present is a conversation with the past

"THE PAST IS NEVER DEAD. IT'S NOT EVEN PAST."
—William Faulkner

AmericanLibraryAssociation
GreatStoriesClub
Resources on Truth, Racial Healing, & Transformation

✓ WKKF’s TRHT Glossary
✓ Resources on Structural Racism
✓ Reading Lists About Race and Racism
✓ About TRHT: www.healourcommunities.org
Maria Sachiko Cecire

Director of the Center for Experimental Humanities, Associate Professor of Literature, Bard College (NY) and GSC National Project Scholar
Maria Sachiko Cecire
Associate Professor of Literature
Director, Center for Experimental Humanities
Bard College, NY
The great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it... History is literally present in all that we do.

James Baldwin
“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”
Origins: settler-colonialism & slavery

Engraving of colonist attack on a Pequot village, 1637

Stowage of a British slave ship, 1788
Origins: settler-colonialism & slavery

- Engraving of colonist attack on a Pequot village, 1637
- Stowage of a British slave ship, 1788
It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.
Black government representation during Reconstruction (1865-1877)

- 16 Black men served in the U.S. Congress
- Over 600 were elected to state legislatures
- Hundreds more held local offices across the South
- Other elected officials included Black U.S. Senators, state governors, and more.
New legal racism: Jim Crow laws from the late 19th and early 20th c.

“Jump Jim Crow” sheet music, 1832, with Thomas D. Rice in blackface.

Lonestar Restaurant Association sign, Dallas, TX.
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“Jump Jim Crow” sheet music, 1832, with Thomas D. Rice in blackface.

Lonestar Restaurant Association sign, Dallas, TX.
Targeted exclusion & internment

THE "CHINESE WALL" AROUND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

WHITE IMMIGRATION

ORIENTAL EXCLUSION

THE SAME LAW WHICH EXCLUDES ORIENTALS SHOULD OPEN WIDE THE PORTALS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.
Targeted exclusion & internment

Japanese-American internment, 1942-45

Political cartoon about the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882
Targeted exclusion & internment
Targeted exclusion & internment
Racism isn’t a design flaw in this country: it is embedded in our DNA.

A banner at Fenway Park, Boston, 2017
The trouble with the American Dream

“For so long I have wanted to escape into the Dream, to fold my country over my head like a blanket. But this has never been an option because the Dream rests on our backs, the bedding made from our bodies.”
What can we do to take steps towards healing and meaningful change?

HISTORY, DESPITE ITS WRENCHING PAIN,
CANNOT BE UNLIVED,
BUT IF FACED WITH COURAGE,
NEED NOT BE LIVED AGAIN.

MAYA ANGELOU
What can we do to take steps towards healing and meaningful change?

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MAYA ANGELOU
Deeper Than Our Skins: The Present is a Conversation with the Past
Deeper Than Our Skins: The Present is a Conversation with the Past

The books in this theme:

• uncover the often-hidden histories of the United States’ Native, enslaved, and immigrant communities

• reach across time and cultures to affirm our shared humanity

• recognize the importance of remembering and recounting unique origins and narratives
Deeper Than Our Skins: The Present is a Conversation with the Past

They empower readers to:

• use knowledge of the past to understand the present
• explore their own intersectional identities,
• empathize with others, and
• identify how to be agents of racial healing and change.
Deeper Than Our Skins: The Present is a Conversation with the Past

As you work together:

• focus on **specific words, phrases, images, and scenes**

• use these examples to explore **bigger concepts** like race and inequality

• **listen and learn** from your participants, and

• affirm them as the **vibrant intellects** that they are.
If the problem of the twentieth century was, in W. E. B. Du Bois’s famous words, “the problem of the color line,” then the problem of the twenty-first century is the problem of colorblindness, the refusal to acknowledge the causes and consequences of enduring racial stratification.

NAOMI MURAKAWA
O, let America be America again—
The land that never has been yet—
And yet must be—the land where every man
is free.
The land that’s mine—the poor man’s,
Indian’s, Negro’s, ME—
Who made America,
Whose sweat and blood, whose faith and pain,
Whose hand at the foundry, whose plow in the
rain,
Must bring back our mighty dream again.

--Langston Hughes, from “Let America Be America Again,” 1936
Pamela McCarter

Equity Initiative Leader & Library Outreach Coordinator, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library (NC) and GSC project director/book club leader
Virtual Book Club
Tips & Resources
It’s Not That Different From Traditional Book Club

1. Who will be in your book club?
2. Where will you hold the book club?
3. What will you read?
4. How will you keep it going?
Amber
Broken To Heal Others
Art Therapy
Calling All Readers!

- Existing Book Clubs or programs
- Collaborate with other libraries or organizations
- School PTA/PTSA
- Meet up groups
- Social Media
Meeting Spaces

- Zoom
- Skype
- Google Meet
- Flipgrid
- Discord
- Webroom
- 8X8
3 Book & Questions

- Bookriot.com
- Supersummary.com
- Goodreads.com
- Bookbub.com
- Booklistreader.com
- Litlover.com
More Than Discussion

• Loom video recording
• Podcasts
• Tedtalks or short films
• Book & Music Pairing
• Compare to Classic
• And more…
Other Tips

• Test for technical difficulties
• Collect email contact information
• Alert if recording session
• Set expectations
• Remain available after session
• Poll readers for next book
Questions & Answers

Please submit your questions using Zoom’s Q&A feature.

If your question is not answered in the time available, please contact the ALA Public Programs Office staff (publicprograms@ala.org) for assistance.

Thank you!