

"A poignant meditation on one girl's struggle to find her way in a new world."
—Nicola Yoon, #1 New York Times bestselling author of *Everything, Everything*

IBI ZOBOI



**AMERICAN
STREET**

American Street

Written by Ibi Zoboi
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The American dream. This dream prompted Fabiola Toussaint and her mother to leave their beloved homeland of Port-au-Prince, Haiti and travel to the United States, in search of a better life, free schools and honorable work. Fabiola and her mother are eager to unite with their extended family in Detroit, but shortly after arriving in New York, their dream quickly becomes tarnished. As Fabiola and her mother go through customs, Fabiola's mother is detained by the United States Immigration, forcing Fabiola to continue the journey alone. In Detroit, Fabiola is united with her aunt and cousins, but

quickly realizes this land of Detroit is very different from Haiti. Her cousins Chantal, Princess (Pri) and Primadonna (Donna), are loud, boisterous and outspoken. Known as the Three Bees, her cousins have a reputation of royalty and power at school. They are known to do anything for family. Even with family surrounding her, loneliness begins to set in as Fabiola desperately misses her mother. With her extended family forbidding Fabiola from speaking her Creole language and wearing her clothing from Haiti, Fabiola finds herself trapped between two cultures. With deep roots in the Haitian Vodou tradition, Fabiola is soon mesmerized by Bad Leg, the crazy man on the street corner who sings songs into the night. One night as Fabiola watches Bad Leg, she witnesses a cruel act of violence. This cruel act unveils the harsh realities of life for this neighborhood plagued with drugs, violence and death.

Pressure is also building within the community to find the drug dealer responsible for selling drugs to a teenager who recently died from a drug overdose. The community is looking for someone to blame, and this is what brings Detective Stevens and Fabiola together. Detective Stevens wants Fabiola to find out information about Dray Carter, the neighborhood drug dealer who is also Donna's boyfriend. By agreeing to help gather the information, Detective Stevens promises to get Fabiola's mother released from the immigration detention center. Fabiola agrees to help the Detective to not only to get her mother released, but to free Donna from her toxic and violent relationship with her boyfriend, Dray. Fabiola develops a romantic relationship with Dray's best friend, Kasim, and the web of deceit and violence continues to expand. Relying on her Vodou culture, the magical songs of Bad Leg and steadfast loyalty from her family, Fabiola discovers the harsh truths of the American dream.

Ibi Zoboi brilliantly and realistically portrays the joys and struggles of Fabiola Toussaint's journey in her new world. Based on Zoboi's own personal experiences of immigrating from Port-au-Prince, Haiti to the United States at the young age of 4, she delves into the realities of life in urban neighborhoods where families struggle with poverty, violence, drugs and social injustices. By incorporating Zoboi's rich traditions of the Haitian-Creole culture, Zoboi develops realistic and authentic characters. The Creole language and dialect are infused throughout the story as Fabiola references Vodou tradition as well as characters such as Bad Leg, Papa Legba, Manman and Matant Jo. By including these references and language throughout the story, readers

are able to see how Fabiola bridges the Haitian and American cultures. Other texts with similar themes that would complement *American Street* are *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas and *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo.

American Street is Ibi Zoboi's first published novel. Prior to writing, Zoboi conducted extensive research into the violence committed against Black teen girls. This research is reflected throughout *American Street* as Zoboi exposes the harsh realities of life, oppression and social injustices faced by each of the characters. Zoboi is able to reveal such truths by periodically inserting chapters revealing each character's back story. By doing so, the audience is able to gain a glimpse into the difficulties and harsh realities of life for the various characters.

The novel has received numerous awards and honors. Some of the awards received include the National Book Award Finalist, a New York Times Notable Book, School Library Journal Best Book of the Year, and ALA Booklist Editor's Choice of 2017. Ibi Zoboi holds an MFA in writing from Vermont College where she received the Norma Fox Mazer Award. She has published several short stories, fables and papers, receiving numerous accolades, awards, and was named a Pushcart nominee. Ibi Zoboi will release two additional young adult novels in the fall of 2018 and the winter of 2019 titled *Pride* and *Black Enough: Stories of Black Teenhood in America*.

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