

Introduction and Editors' Note

Change, be it environmental, circumstantial, or personal, is always present. While change is often difficult, it creates tension that precipitates growth and creates opportunities for new, unexpected directions. The reviews in this issue focus on people and places undergoing external and internal change, offering characters new insights and direction.

Two of the stories take place in vibrant U.S. neighborhoods humming with life. In *Everything Naomi Loved* the neighborhood is being gentrified. As a result, a favorite tree is felled, neighbors move because their buildings are sold, and businesses close to make way for luxury apartments. As each part of their neighborhood changes, Naomi and Mr. Ray document those changes on a mural they are painting, until the mural itself is torn down. But Naomi holds onto her past story by taking a piece of the mural with her as she moves to a new home. In *Merci Suárez Changes Gears*, the protagonist Merci lives with her mother, next to her grandparents and her aunt, so has a rich extended family life. But it takes some middle school drama for her to realize just how rich and wonderful that family life is.

Three of the stories take place in war zones. *Dancing Hands*, the picturebook biography of Venezuelan pianist Teresa Carreño, narrates the journey of the young girl and her family who escaped conflict in their home country only to encounter the United States Civil War. Invited to play for President Lincoln who had lost his son, Teresa used music to make a change for Lincoln and his grieving family. As she became world-renowned, she continued to use her music and influence to work for change for women. In another biography, *Sachiko* tells the story of a young girl's survival after the Nagasaki atomic bomb blast in 1945 Japan and how she finally decided to use her life experience to work for peace in the middle of conflict. In the Spanish language picturebook *La noche mas noche* from Mexico, a young boy and his parents attempt to cross a sea in a fishing boat, leaving all behind. Throughout the narrative readers have a window into the boy's thoughts as he tries to process all that is changing around him.

Several of the titles are gripping stories of internal change in which the illustrations reflect the growth of the characters. In *Each Kindness*, Maya arrives in a new U.S. school, seeking to make friends. Told from the perspective of Chloe, one of her classmates, the story focuses on her life-changing realization that she has lost the opportunity to reach out to Maya in kindness. Only after Maya moves away does Cloe understand the ripple effect of her unkind acts. In *Sulwe*, skin tones are the struggle. When she is called names, a young Black girl wishes she could exchange her darker skin for a lighter shade. A star ("Sulwe" in a Kenyan language) takes her on a journey exploring the story of two sisters, Night and Day. Just like Night, Sulwe realizes that the world needs all shades of light and dark in order to thrive.

Two of the titles take place in the Philippines. In *Everlasting Nora*, the young protagonist lives with her mother in Manila's oldest cemetery. Nora has to grow up fast when her mother disappears, and the girl has to face the consequences of her mother's poor choices. However, Nora realizes she is not alone when her community of neighbors among the tombs help her find her mother and bring her home. President Duterte's war on drugs is the background for *Patron Saints of Nothing*. When his pen pal cousin is killed, Jay heads to the Philippines to uncover the truth about Jun, and in the process begins to appreciate the culture of his father.

This is the final issue in which Prisca Martens is a co-editor. Thank you, Prisca, for all of your work on WOW Review! And welcome to María Acevedo-Aquino, the incoming co-editor.

Upcoming calls:

Volume 14, Issue 2 – Theme: STEM titles (Winter 2022) – Submission deadline: November 15, 2021. The editors welcome reviews of global or multicultural books with subjects that are related to STEM – science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Volume 14, Issue 3 – Theme: Open (Spring 2022) – Submission deadline: February 15, 2022. The editors welcome reviews of any children’s or YA book that highlights intercultural understanding and global perspectives.

Susan Corapi and Prisca Martens, Co-Editors

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