

Introduction and Editor's Note

Global Diaspora

With the recent passing of author Walter Dean Myers, a champion of African American children's literature, and the current conversation on diversity in children's books, perhaps more than ever children's books have become a symbol for the shifting colors and cultures of the United States. Before his passing, Myers (2014) challenged the children's book industry to represent an accurate portrayal, both proportionally and culturally, of that population. Indeed, during a time of increasing globalization that challenges notions of borders and boundaries, teachers and parents are looking for titles that engage with the varying histories of U.S. cultures, including the movement and displacement of people across spaces, cities, and countries.

In this issue of WOW Review, we present a sample of books for children and adolescents that address some of the experiences of groups living in diaspora. Our focus is on children's books that present both international and intra-national Diasporas, so, in some cases, books reflect on immigration while others on migration. Some stories are based on the authors' experiences while others are fiction. *This is the Rope: A Story from the Great Migration* by Jacqueline Woodson introduces the reader to Woodson's own family experiences as African Americans who migrated intra-nationally, from South Carolina to New York City, as part of the Great Migration (between 1915 and 1970). Also autobiographical is *The Four Immigrants Manga: A Japanese Experience in San Francisco, 1904-1924*. Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama uses his experiences and those of three other Japanese friends to represent different perspectives on Japanese immigration to San Francisco. The characters share a strong Homeland orientation which sustains them as they face different challenges.

The Secret Side of Empty draws on author Maria E. Andreu's experiences as an Argentinian who came to the United States undocumented. Given the current context of the U.S. Southwest, where thousands of Latin American children are crossing the border unaccompanied and undocumented, this story provides an opportunity to reflect on a controversial issue that has reached the level of a humanitarian crisis, while focusing on a different group and country of origin. Offering insights into the Puerto Rican diaspora to New York during the Great Depression, Nicholasa Mohr's *All for the Better: A Story of El Barrio* narrates the biography of Evelina López Antonetty, an activist who showed resilience and fought for her community stateside. The book highlights both the difficulties and resourcefulness of diasporic communities as they contribute to their new environments.

The last two books are fictionalized accounts of two different ethnic groups. *Going Home* presents a facet of the lives of Mexican migrant workers in the United States when they have the opportunity to return home. The children in the story gain insights into their parents' strong homeland orientation. Finally, presenting a more international perspective is Maria Martirosova's *A Photograph as a Memento* about the Armenian diaspora in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, one of the former republics of the Soviet Union. The main character also immigrates to the U.S., adding another layer to her already complex diasporic experience.

Collectively, these stories speak of the challenges that often come when people, forced by historical and economic factors, leave their home countries. Some of the challenges involve dealing with stereotypical perceptions and treatment of immigrants in the host country, learning a new language, and adapting to new cultures. Several stories highlight the negotiation and development of hybrid identities in the diaspora, the resilience of newcomers, and the newness they bring with them to the host country. We hope this short collection will point readers, parents, and educators to stories which help further an understanding of history, race, culture, and nation within a U.S. context. This collection has the potential to contribute to the development of critical and reflective capacities to engage with other human beings in a complex world, what Suzanne Choo (2013) refers to as hospitably embracing the other.

References

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