

February 2019

Editors' Introduction, Part I: Mapping Lineage and Activism Across Generations

Sarah Park Dahlen

St. Catherine University, spark@stkate.edu

Gabrielle Atwood Halko

West Chester University, ghalko@wcupa.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://sophia.stkate.edu/rdyl>

Recommended Citation

Dahlen, Sarah Park and Halko, Gabrielle Atwood (2019) "Editors' Introduction, Part I: Mapping Lineage and Activism Across Generations," *Research on Diversity in Youth Literature*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 2 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://sophia.stkate.edu/rdyl/vol1/iss2/1>

This Front Matter is brought to you for free and open access by SOPHIA. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research on Diversity in Youth Literature by an authorized editor of SOPHIA. For more information, please contact amshaw@stkate.edu.

We begin this co-editors' introduction with a word of gratitude for the incredible support and enthusiasm we received in response to *Research on Diversity in Youth Literature (RDYL)* 1.1. Since the journal's launch in June 2018, readers from 249 institutions in 55 countries have downloaded our essays over 2,700 times. Gabrielle Atwood Halko and Sarah Park Dahlen have spoken about *RDYL* at the Children's Literature Association annual conference (San Antonio, TX) and the University of New Mexico's Eleventh Annual Mentoring Conference. Over 100 posters of "The Reading Tree," the beautiful artwork that Maya Christina Gonzalez created for our first issue, now hang in libraries, offices, classrooms, and homes throughout the United States and beyond. We are heartened by the reception to this artwork and have dedicated the proceeds of poster sales to funding future cover artists. Thank you writers, reviewers, readers, board members, artists, institutions, and collective community for supporting us through our first year.

In this issue of *Research on Diversity in Youth Literature*, we are pleased to share essays addressing a wide range of topics in youth literature. They are diverse in terms of content, scope, and methodology. In various ways, they engage with questions of lineage, looking at how scholars, practitioners, and children's book creators today build on the works of those who have gone before. As newer generations of female children's librarians looked to their "foremothers" for wisdom (as Betsy Hearne noted in 1999), the essayists in this issue address the ways in which earlier generations of book people (writers, illustrators, librarians) influence the works that were/are to come after.

Looking back to the early twentieth century, Lettycia Terrones traces the activist work of three Latina librarians through multiple generations. While scholars such as Marilisa Jiménez-García have chronicled the work of children's librarian Pura Belpré, in "Tracing Activist Genealogies in Latina Children's Librarianship" Terrones extends her scholarship by mapping Belpré's activist work over the decades and writes about how later children's librarians - Oralia Garza de Cortés and Sandra Ríos Balderrama - continue to carry on her commitment to diversifying children's literature, particularly in regards to books depicting Latinx communities. The establishment of the Pura Belpré Award serves as an important marker, but it is not a

culmination: the Award continues to highlight the many diverse accomplishments of Latinx writers and illustrators.

There are still too many untold stories of important events around the world. The 2018 publication of *The Night Diary* (Veera Hiranandani), which in 2019 won a Newbery Honor, provides a rare, intimate, first-person account of one family's survival during the Partition of India (1947). The Partition was one of the most violent and consequential moments in Indian and Pakistani history, but as Nithya Sivashankar points out, there is still a great paucity of books addressing this topic for young people. In "Religion, Riots and Rift: Representations of the Partition of 1947 in English-Language Picture Books," Sivashankar analyzes the few picture books about this cultural and historical trauma that do exist. She also takes care to note the gaps and silences; for example, Sivashankar has not found any Pakistani- or Bangladeshi-authored English-language picture books that take place during the Partition. In regards to this topic, there is still much more to be said.

In recent years, Dr. Seuss' children's books have come under renewed scrutiny, especially when set against his larger body of works. For example, in early 2017, activist students in South Pasadena, California, pushed back on their school's Dr. Seuss Week celebration by distributing flyers depicting and explaining some of his racist cartoons (Bologna). That same year, children's book authors Lisa Yee, Mike Curato, and Mo Willems declined to attend the Springfield Children's Literature Festival because the Amazing World of Dr. Seuss Museum, where the Festival was to take place, refused to remove a racist mural depicting a stereotypical Chinese caricature from *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street* (Bever). In "The Cat is Out of the Bag: A Critical Race Analysis of Dr. Seuss's Children's Books," Katie Ishizuka and Ramón Stephens count and analyze the many depictions of racism and othering throughout Dr. Seuss' books. This builds on their 2018 The Conscious Kid blog post, "A Critical Race Reading of Dr. Seuss and Resource Guide for Read Across America Day 2018," which provides some of their preliminary findings and resources for better understanding racialized imagery in works for young people. "The Cat is Out of the Bag" is one model of the type of scholarship that *RDYL* strives to promote - works that create relationships between *RDYL*

and like-minded organizations and provide another platform through which they can share their scholarship.

In addition to these essays, we present two reviews under the direction of *RDYL*'s new book review editor, Sonia Alejandra Rodríguez. In an update to their groundbreaking text, *The Heart Has Its Reasons: Young Adult Literature with Gay/Lesbian/Queer Content, 1969-2004* (2006), Michael Cart and Christine A. Jenkins expand their analyses of LGBTQ young adult literature in *Representing the Rainbow in Young Adult Literature: LGBTQ+ Content since 1969*. Jason Vanfosson thoughtfully places their new text into a more contemporary context, pointing out the ways in which Cart and Jenkins have updated *Representing the Rainbow* to reflect the expansion of this canon. In the review for *Voices of Resistance: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Chican@ Children's Literature*, Domino Renee Perez praises the multivalent text not only for its attention to Latinx children's literary tradition but also for its resources to resist the many forces that seek to minimize Chican@ lives and representations thereof.

Finally, given *RDYL*'s activist mission and the socio-political environment of the past few years, Part II of *RDYL* 1.2 (to be published shortly after Part I is published) makes space for the discussing the ways in which young people have activated and advocated for themselves and their communities. In early 2018 the co-editors asked doctoral student and debut author Breanna McDaniel (*Hands Up*, illustrated by Shane Evans, 2019) to edit a special section on youth activism in childhood and children's media. We envisioned essays where young people could address their activism in movements such as Black Lives Matter and March for Our Lives and where scholars could produce short pieces in which they both encouraged activism in the field of publishing and interrogated depictions of activism in youth literature. Additionally, we are thrilled to publish an illustration created by Amelia Hare, a young artist, for the cover of our second issue. We hope you will be energized and inspired as you engage with this work!

Notes

1. In the co-editors introduction to *RDYL* 1.1, we wrote that Marilisa Jiménez García was one of the scholars present in the December 2016 cafe meeting. While Jiménez García

played a crucial part in the early conversations in launching *RDYL*, she was not actually present at that meeting.

Works Cited

Bever, Lindsey. "Dr. Seuss Museum to Replace Mural After Complaints that it Depicted 'Jarring Racial Stereotype.'" *The Washington Post*, 6 October 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2017/10/05/dr-seuss-museum-under-fire-over-mural-depicting-jarring-racial-stereotype-of-a-chinese-man/?utm_term=.caf0b1f7dd9. Accessed 13 February 2019.

Bologna, Caroline. "Kids Use 'Dr. Seuss Week' To Teach Classmates About His Racist Cartoons." *The Huffington Post*, 6 March 2017, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/kids-use-dr-seuss-week-to-teach-classmates-about-his-racist-cartoons_n_58b99751e4b0b9989417281f. Accessed 13 February 2019.

2018 Children's Literature Association Conference. Children's Literature Association, <https://chla.memberclicks.net/2018>. Accessed 7 January 2019.

Hearne, Betsy. "Sacred Texts: What Our Foremothers Left Us in the Way of Psalms, Proverbs, Precepts, and Practices." *The Horn Book Magazine*, September/October 1999, pp. 536-547.

Jiménez-García, Marilisa. "The Pura Belpre Medal: the Latino/a Child in America, the Need for Diversity, and Name-branding Latinidad." *Prizing Children's Literature: The Cultural Politics of Children's Book Awards*, edited by Kenneth B. Kidd and Joseph T. Thomas, Routledge, 2016, pp.104-117.

McDaniel, Breanna. *Hands Up*. Illustrated by Shane Evans, Dial Books 2019.

The University of New Mexico Mentoring Conference <https://mentor.unm.edu/conference/>.
Accessed 7 January 2019.

Nel, Philip. *Was the Cat in the Hat Black?: The Hidden Racism of Children's Literature, and the Need for Diverse Books*. Routledge, 2017.

The Conscious Kid. "A Critical Race Reading of Dr. Seuss and Resource Guide for Read Across America Day 2018." *The Conscious Kid*, 18 Feb. 2018,
<https://www.theconsciouskid.org/blog/2018/2/18/a-critical-race-reading-of-dr-seuss>.
Accessed 13 Feb. 2019.